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ON CHESS AND WAR

DISPATCH FROM UKRAINE

GM ALEXANDER BELIAVSKY:

EVERY CHESS PLAYER UNDERSTANDS WHAT POSITION HE IS IN IF HE CANNOT TAKE THE OPPONENT'S PIECES

MAGNUS CARLSEN AND THE MELTWATER CHAMPIONS TOUR

IS THERE A NEW SCHISM LOOMING IN THE CHESS WORLD?

VISIT…

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CHAIRMAN: Shaun Taulbut
DIRECTOR: Stephen Lowe
EDITORS: Milan Dinic and Shaun Taulbut
PHOTO EDITOR: David Llada
PREPRESS SPECIALIST: Milica Mitic
PHOTOGRAPHY: John Saunders, CF/ Brendan O'Gorman, World Chess Officials, chess-news.rus, chess24.com, Shutterstock, Wikipedia
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ENQUIRIES: editor@britishchessmagazine.co.uk
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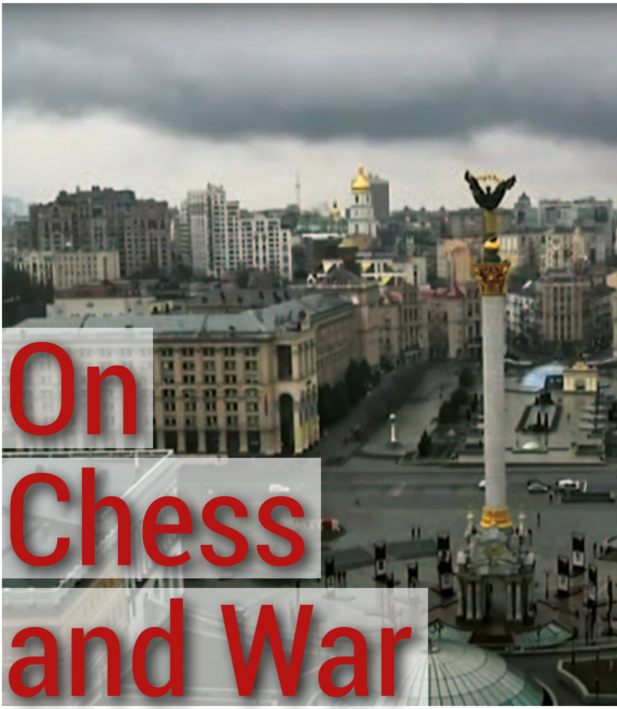


On Chess and War

Chess has often been used as a metaphor for the conduct of war. 'Gambit', 'zugzwang', 'checkmate', 'stalemate' are all chess terms which are often heard when describing events in the social sphere, especially in the realm of politics, diplomacy and warfare. And, as the famous Prussian military commander Carl von Clausewitz noted, 'War is merely the continuation of politics by other means.'

Chess and war go back a long way. Its origins are in India, where in the 7th century AD a game known as chaturanga developed, which had 'four divisions (of the military)' - infantry, cavalry, elephantry and chariotry. From this the modern-day chess pieces would evolve – the pawn, knight, bishop and rook. The game spread to Persia, the Muslim world and then to southern Europe where it evolved roughly into its current form by about 1500 AD.

However, comparing chess to war – albeit interesting and useful for making a point – is not really appropriate in practical terms. In the world of politics, PR and

Living under the fog of war – Kiev/Kyiv, Ukraine

perception are often more important than facts. By contrast, as perceptively noted by journalist and ECF president Dominic Lawson, chess 'is a perfect information game - each player can see on the board everything there is to know about his opponent's dispositions'.

The battles on the chessboard often produce titanic struggles of mind and character which lead to 'great games' and 'beauties' which are passionately analysed, memorised and admired. In war, as anyone who has ever experienced it will tell you, there is nothing great or beautiful. (On a personal note, I grew up in war-torn Yugoslavia and later lived under the 78-day long bombardment by NATO. I have had more than a glimpse of the realities of war.)

It would in my view certainly be extremely beneficial if, apart from adopting chess terminology, politics and politicians were to adopt the rules and principles of chess. In war (as in love) everything is allowed and events are therefore unpredictable and often unstable; by contrast, in chess the rules are clear. Furthermore, in chess the protagonists have to abide by the same set of rules, with no exceptions. Both the world chess champion and the absolute beginner are subject to exactly the same rules, rights and obligations over the chessboard irrespective of their talents and resources. Imagine a world where, in international relations, exactly the same rules, obligations and principles applied equally to both a superpower and the weakest of countries.

The principle of 'uniformity' already exists in international affairs, in theory at least, as evidenced by the establishment of the United Nations. The UN represents respect for and the uniform application of the concepts of international law, sovereignty and territorial integrity. In theory at least. The harsh reality of world events however does not align with the ideals behind the creation of the UN. How many times have we seen, in recent history, the Great Powers (be they the US, NATO or Russia) effectively ignore these international rules and take aggressive military actions with terrible consequences for citizens and soldiers who find themselves on the front line.

Sadly, not only is the real world very far away from having the clear and predictable rules and certainties of chess, but it seems that we live in a time where there is incessant talk and fear of war. And fear not just of the casual metaphors of political campaigning such as a 'war on poverty' or 'war on crime', but fear of real, actual war. Constantly in the news today are Afghanistan, Syria and now Ukraine.

Chess is a game of peace, appreciated by millions around the globe who enjoy the mental stimulation it brings and the strong sense of community and fraternity it engenders. And yet, as far as I can see

Source: wikipedia.org

GM Alexander Beliavsky, former USSR Champion, for BCM from Lviv, Ukraine:

EVERY CHESS PLAYER UNDERSTANDS WHAT POSITION HE IS IN IF HE CANNOT TAKE THE OPPONENT'S PIECES

Let us give voice to one of the greatest masters of chess, the Soviet and Ukrainian champion Alexander Beliavsky, who kindly spoke with us from his home town of Lviv in western Ukraine. On behalf of BCM, I would like to thank Mr. Beliavsky who found the time and energy to share with our readers his thoughts through the lens of chess.

(Note: This interview was conducted just before Russia started its invasion of Ukraine.)

BCM: What has life been like for you in the past month or so? Have you been able to play any chess? Does it help you forget, at least a bit, what is happening?

Alexander Beliavsky: I spent more than a week in the hospital due to Covid complications and these worries overshadowed all other problems for a while.

Due to my venerable age, I play much less frequently in tournaments compared to 40 or even 10 years ago. Chess helped me escape from reality only when I was completely absorbed in the struggle for the highest achievements. That is, in the 80s of the last century. Now, it’s different.

BCM: In chess terms, how would you describe the Ukrainian position and also the Russian position?

A.B: Russians can shoot down Ukrainian pawns and pieces, but Ukrainians cannot do the same, because of 4,500 Russian nuclear warheads. I think every chess player understands what position he is in if he cannot take the opponent's pieces.

BCM: The next chess Olympiad is supposed to take place in Moscow this summer. Do you think the Ukrainian team should participate?

A.B: The Ministry of Sports of Ukraine has not financed teams for any sporting events on the territory of Russia since 2014, when Russia seized Crimea and other Ukrainian territories. Of course, the Ukrainian Chess Federation can find private sources of funding to send a team to Russia. But I think that the federation will not do this so as not to violate the attitude of the State to this issue.

BCM: Can chess in any way help resolve this?

A.B: I don't think that chess can solve an interstate conflict because it's almost always a matter of big money.

For example, Russia seized Crimea because of the huge gas deposits in the 200-mile economic zone. According to Deloitte, this is about 766.6 billion cubic meters of gas and 232.6 million tons of oil and condensate. The cost of gas alone at the current price of $1,000 per 1,000 cubic meters is $766 billion.

This is a lot of money even for the United Kingdom. For Ukraine, this is almost twenty years of government budget revenue.

BCM: What would your message be to the readers in the UK?

A.B: I wish all readers of BCM exciting fighting exclusively on the chessboard.

in the media – particularly in relation to the most recent events – the voices of the anti-war movements seem to be muted and sidelined. Instead, there is passionate, almost ardent warmongering everywhere, of course – all in the name of peace. Here let us remember the chillingly prophetic words of Stefan Zweig, author of the famous ‘Schachnovelle’ who said: ‘When they are preparing for war, those who rule by force speak most copiously about peace until they have completed the mobilization process’.

Current events in Ukraine are a terrible existential tragedy for so very many both in Russia and Ukraine, whose identities and cultures are deeply intertwined. As regards chess, Ukraine is a country where some of the greatest chess minds of all time, Russian and Ukrainian, were born and lived - David Bronstein, Mark Taimanov, Isaac Boleslavsky, Leonid Stein, Alexander Beliavsky, Vasyl Ivanchuk, Kateryna Lagno, sisters Anna and Maria Muzychuk to name but a few.

Even the peaceful world of ches is affected. Following concerns, FIDE has decided to move the 44th Chess Olympiad from Moscow to another location. In the meantime, India has sent its bid to host the event, but BCM understand that Serbia is also considering to place a bid and at least one other country. Also, all official competitions planned are to be moved from Russia. This is a big blow. Chess is almost synonymous with Russia. Also, a lot, if not most of the money for chess events comes from Russian businesses and government.

Whatever our thoughts and opinions on the matter, we in the chess community should keep in mind and act in the spirit of the motto of FIDE: ‘Gens Una Sumus’ - ‘We are one Family’. Surely, these words have never had more poignancy than in the current darkness.

Milan Dinic, Editor

HOW THE CHESSWORLD REACTED TO THE WAR IN UKRAINE

By Milan Dinic

Chess professionals weigh in on the conflict, with some calling for a ban on Russian players

The decision of Russia to go to war in Ukraine prompted chess players to voice their opinions. While many condemned Russian actions, some supported them and some just reflected on the tragedy of war.

In its reaction to the events, the International chess federation, **FIDE**, has decided to move all relevant competitions from Russia, including the Chess Olympiad which was due to take place in Moscow this summer. FIDE is likely to find itself under financial pressure as well given that it relies on the support of Russian state companies such as the energy giant Gazprom.

World Champion **Magnus Carlsen's** PlayMagnus group released a statement saying they are 'devastated' by the events in Ukraine and have voiced their support for the Ukrainian people. Carlsen later tweeted the statement with a brief comment: "Peace is cool. War - not so much".

Former world champion, **Garry Kasparov** – who has for years been a staunched critic of Russia (and FIDE's president Arkady Dvorkovich, who was once Russia's deputy PM), was among the first to react with a barrage of tweets calling for international action. GM Peter Heine Nielsen called for the chessworld to 'show solidarity with Ukraine' while the former contender for the title of world champion, Ian Nepomniachtchi has said the world should say no to war.

Some went further, such as **Jacob Aagaard**, the Danish-born Scottish GM, who called on abandoning all ties with Russian chess sponsors, removing Russian players from the World Championship cycle and banning Russians from all international competitions.

ANATOLY KARPOV SANCTIONED BY THE EU

Former World Champion **Anatoly Karpov** is one of the people facing sanctions by the EU because as a member of the Russian parliament (Duma) he voted in favour of the recognition of the People's Republics of Donetsk and Luhansk in eastern Ukraine.

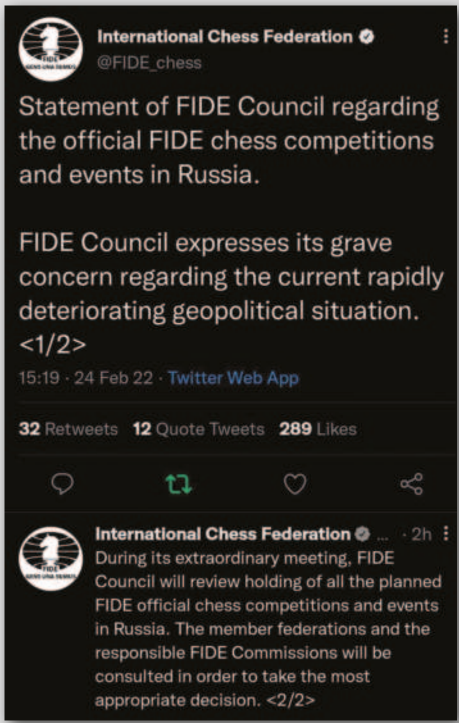
The sanctions mean Karpov will be unable to travel to or transit through the EU.

Nigel Short, the current vice-president of FIDE has described the Russian invasion of Ukraine as 'the most appalling act of aggression against a sovereign nation'.

On the other hand, some showed sympathy for Russia's actions, such as the Crimean born Russian GM and former contender for the title of world champion, **Sergey Karjakin**. Russian GM **Sergei Shipov** justified Russia's actions, citing concerns about Russians in the east of Ukraine.

Some were more neutral such as the Indian GM **Vidit Gujrati** who just posted a tweet saying: "Tragic & inhumane".

At the time of writing, the morning of 25th February, the world champion, Magnus Carlsen, remained silent on the issue.



International Chess Federation
@FIDE_chess

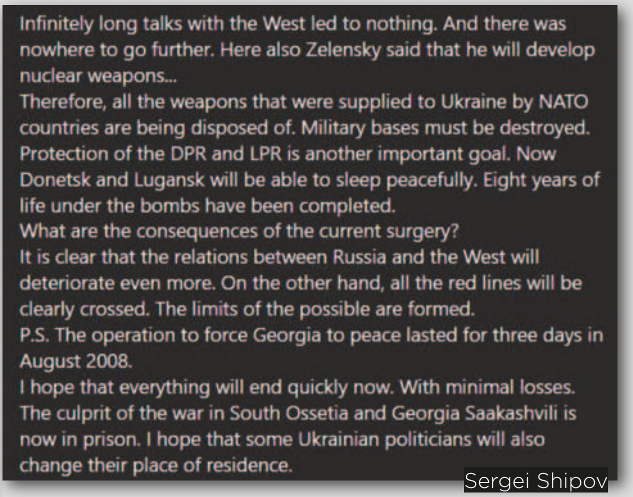
Statement of FIDE Council regarding the official FIDE chess competitions and events in Russia.

FIDE Council expresses its grave concern regarding the current rapidly deteriorating geopolitical situation. <1/2>

15:19 · 24 Feb 22 · Twitter Web App

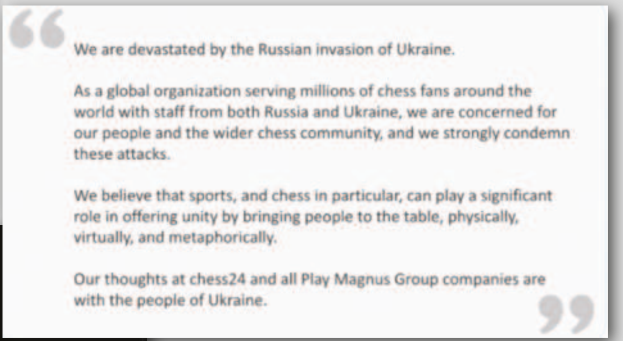
32 Retweets 12 Quote Tweets 289 Likes

International Chess Federation ... · 2h
During its extraordinary meeting, FIDE Council will review holding of all the planned FIDE official chess competitions and events in Russia. The member federations and the responsible FIDE Commissions will be consulted in order to take the most appropriate decision. <2/2>



Infinitely long talks with the West led to nothing. And there was nowhere to go further. Here also Zelensky said that he will develop nuclear weapons...
Therefore, all the weapons that were supplied to Ukraine by NATO countries are being disposed of. Military bases must be destroyed. Protection of the DPR and LPR is another important goal. Now Donetsk and Lugansk will be able to sleep peacefully. Eight years of life under the bombs have been completed.
What are the consequences of the current surgery?
It is clear that the relations between Russia and the West will deteriorate even more. On the other hand, all the red lines will be clearly crossed. The limits of the possible are formed.
P.S. The operation to force Georgia to peace lasted for three days in August 2008.
I hope that everything will end quickly now. With minimal losses.
The culprit of the war in South Ossetia and Georgia Saakashvili is now in prison. I hope that some Ukrainian politicians will also change their place of residence.

Sergei Shipov

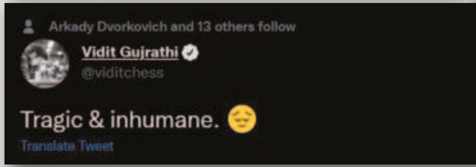


We are devastated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

As a global organization serving millions of chess fans around the world with staff from both Russia and Ukraine, we are concerned for our people and the wider chess community, and we strongly condemn these attacks.

We believe that sports, and chess in particular, can play a significant role in offering unity by bringing people to the table, physically, virtually, and metaphorically.

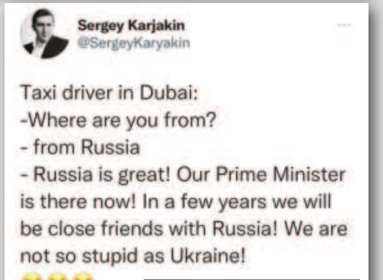
Our thoughts at chess24 and all Play Magnus Group companies are with the people of Ukraine.



Arkady Dvorkovich and 13 others follow
Vidit Gujrathi
@viditchess

Tragic & inhumane. 😔

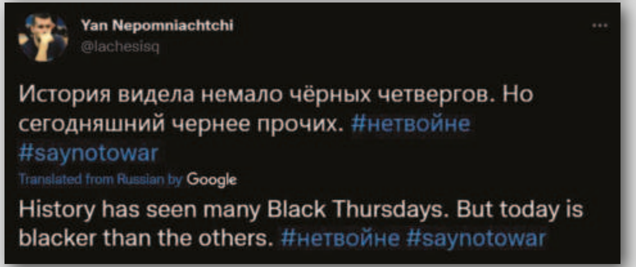
Translate Tweet



Sergey Karjakin
@SergeyKaryakin

Taxi driver in Dubai:
-Where are you from?
- from Russia
- Russia is great! Our Prime Minister is there now! In a few years we will be close friends with Russia! We are not so stupid as Ukraine!
😂😂😂

Sergey Karjakin later deleted this tweet

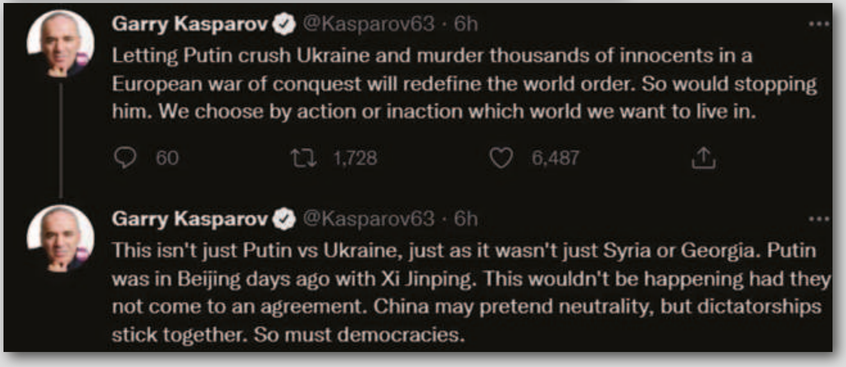


Yan Nepomniachtchi
@lachesisq

История видела немало чёрных четвергов. Но сегодняшний чернее прочих. #нетвойне #saynotowar

Translated from Russian by Google

History has seen many Black Thursdays. But today is blacker than the others. #нетвойне #saynotowar



Garry Kasparov @Kasparov63 · 6h
Letting Putin crush Ukraine and murder thousands of innocents in a European war of conquest will redefine the world order. So would stopping him. We choose by action or inaction which world we want to live in.

60 1,728 6,487

Garry Kasparov @Kasparov63 · 6h
This isn't just Putin vs Ukraine, just as it wasn't just Syria or Georgia. Putin was in Beijing days ago with Xi Jinping. This wouldn't be happening had they not come to an agreement. China may pretend neutrality, but dictatorships stick together. So must democracies.

THE 2022 GRAND PRIX – PART ONE:
BERLIN (4-17 FEBRUARY)

NAKAMURA'S

DOMINANCE WITH FATE BY HIS SIDE

THE KEY DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NAKAMURA AND EVERYBODY ELSE – HE CARED *LESS* ABOUT QUALIFYING OR WINNING BECAUSE HE DOESN'T NEED THE MONEY

By GM Alex Colovic / alexcolovic.com
Photo: World Chess Officials

The first of the three Grand Prix events in 2022 took place in Berlin from 4th to 17th February.

Due to the omnipresent virus, there were immediate problems with the confirmation of the players - Dmitry Andreikin tested positive before travelling while Ding Liren couldn't get his German visa in time. These two players were replaced by Andrey Esipenko and Radoslav Wojtaszek, respectively. As usual with late replacements, the new players achieved excellent results and played important roles in the qualifications from the pools.

THE POOLS

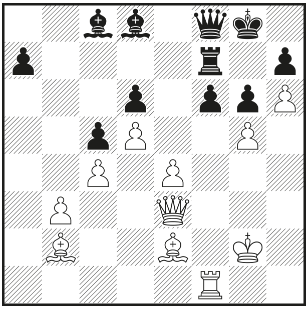
In **Pool A** the main story was 'The Return of the Streamer' - Hikaru Nakamura (who has recently dedicated himself more to streaming chess than playing it). Not having played a single classical game for two years, Nakamura was even listed as an inactive player on the FIDE rating list. However, this didn't stop him from showing great chess and winning his group. Nakamura was well-prepared (the only exception was his game with Esipenko) and played to his strengths - excellent calculation and good technique. Coupled with his solid repertoire, Nakamura avoided big blunders and didn't lose a classical game in the whole tournament.

I got the impression that the endless bullets, blitzes and puzzle rushes that he plays on his stream kept him in shape throughout this period, so the lack of practice didn't really show. He adapted seamlessly from the ultra-fast time controls to the classical one, took his time and never made rushed or rash decisions.

Here is the final phase of his second game with Grischuk, a game where the Russian had to be victorious if he were to have chances of winning the pool.

Hikaru **Nakamura** – Alexander **Grischuk**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Pool A Berlin GER (5.1)



Grischuk tried the King's Indian in an attempt to complicate matters, but Nakamura kept good control and put him under pressure. Now very low on time, Grischuk miscalculates:

35...fxg5? Opening the long diagonal is suicidal. His position is very difficult, but now he loses by force.

35...a5 was a better try, preventing b4 and keeping the position closed. White can manoeuvre at his will, but there is no direct win.

36.♕c3 ♖xf1 37.♕h8+ ♔f7 38.♕xh7+ ♔e8 39.♕xg6+! Nakamura calculated the winning sequence precisely.

39.♗xf1? even loses for White after 39...♗h3+! 40.♔xh3 ♕xf1+ 41.♔h2 ♕e2+ and the white king cannot escape from the many checks that Black uses to collect material: 42.♔g1 ♕d1+ 43.♔h2 ♕c2+ 44.♔g3 *(44.♔g1 ♕b1+ winning the bishop with check.)* 44...♕xb3+ 45.♔g4 ♕d1+ 46.♔g3 ♕g1+ 47.♔f3 ♕f1+ 48.♔g3 ♕f4+ 49.♔h3 *(or 49.♔g2 ♕xe4+)* 49...g4+ 50.♔g2 ♕xe4+ and Black can also use his bishop in the attack along the h4-d8 diagonal.

39...♔e7 In case of 39...♖f7, 40.h7 and the pawn promotes. After 39...♔d7 40.♗xf1 there is no ...♗h3.

40.♕xg5+ ♖f6 41.h7 Black is completely tied up and the h-pawn decides.

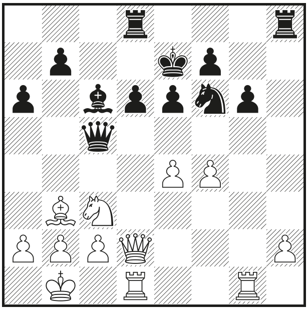
41...♔d7 42.♕g8 Black resigned as after 42.♕g8 ♖f2+ 43.♔g1 there are no more checks and the h-pawn promotes.

1-0

Grischuk was the rating favourite of this pool but his play lacked clarity and he missed too many chances. He won a game only in the last round, against tail-ender Bacrot. This game had a very curious moment in the middlegame.

Alexander **Grischuk** – Etienne **Bacrot**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Pool A Berlin GER (6.1)



In the Richter-Rauzer Variation, Black obtained a solid position, but White hopes to open up the position in the middle of the board in order to get to Black's king in the centre. White's next move is logical, but it allows an unexpected combination.

20.♖g5? Both players missed the fantastic line that would have won for Black: 20.♖ge1 was a better alternative, with the idea f5. For example, 20...♔f8 21.f5 gxf5 22.exf5 ♕xf5 23.♖f1 with compensation for the pawn in view of the open files in the centre and the unsafe position of Black's king.

20...♕b6? Bacrot misses his chance: 20...♘xe4!! was a stunning queen sacrifice.

The point is that after 21.♘xe4 ♗xe4 22.♖xc5 dxc5 23.♕e1 ♖xd1+ 24.♕xd1 ♖xh2 White cannot stop ...♖h1 with an easily winning bishop endgame for Black.

21.♖e1 ♖h7? Allowing White to open the game. 21...♖h4 was better, with the idea 22.♘d5+ ♗xd5 23.exd5 e5 24.fxe5 ♘e4! as now the rook on the fourth rank controls the e4-square and allows for the knight jump. The position remains unclear after 25.exd6+ ♔xd6 26.♕e2 ♕f2! but Black is not worse at all.

22.♘d5+! Grischuk takes his chance.

22...exd5 23.exd5+ ♔f8 24.dxc6 ♕xc6 25.♕d4 Here 25.f5! was much stronger, but even the game move keeps a big advantage as Black's king will never be safe. His conversion was far from perfect but, eventually, Grischuk won his first game of the event in 73 moves.

1-0

Nakamura's qualification was not without luck. Last-minute replacement Esipenko started slowly, avoiding a loss to Grischuk in the first and losing to Nakamura in the second round. He got into the tournament and beat Bacrot twice to set up a thrilling final round encounter with Nakamura. If he won, he would qualify, while a draw was in Nakamura's favour as he had half a point more. The decisive game was a real thriller.

Andrey **Esipenko** – Hikaru **Nakamura**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Pool A Berlin GER (6.2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 Esipenko successfully used the Italian Giuoco Piano in his match with Carlsen in last year's World Cup. Here he repeats the opening, believing that it offers him better chances than the Berlin after 3.♗b5 ♘f6, which is Nakamura's staple opening against the Ruy Lopez.

3...♗c5 4.d3 ♘f6 5.a4!? This move-order is aimed against the plan with quick ...d5 that Nakamura employed recently in his online games.

Grischuk was the rating favourite of this pool but his play lacked clarity and he missed too many chances

5.0-0 0-0 6.c3 d5 was frequently played by Nakamura in last December's World Rapid and Blitz in Warsaw.

5...a6 In the past Nakamura preferred plans with ...a5.

6.0-0 d6 7.a5!? This idea of the early a-pawn push was introduced by Alekseenko in his game against Harikrishna at the World Cup in 2019. Nakamura seemed somewhat surprised by this choice and soon enough he mixed up several plans.

7...♗a7 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 h6 There are other moves as well, like 9...♘e7 and 9...♗e6, but Nakamura's choice is the most common one.

10.♗e3!? Usually White plays 10.♖e1 first, but this is more ambitious as White wants to have the rook on the f-file in case it is opened after ...♗xe3, fxe3.

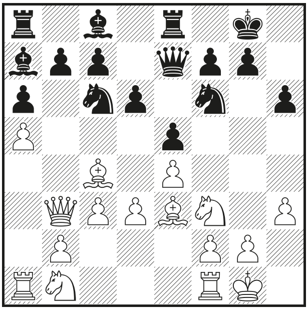
10...♖e8 Nakamura doesn't want to open the f-file, but after the game he said he should have done so! With this move he prepares ...♗e6 as he wants to avoid the doubling of the pawns on e-file if White takes on e6.

In fact, the move 10...♗xe3 has already been played and Black obtained a good game after 11.fxe3 ♕e7 *(or 11...♘e7 12.♘h4 d5 13.exd5 ♘exd5 with a good position for Black.)* 12.♕b3 ♖b8 preparing the exchange of bishops after ...♗e6 so that the pawn on b7 doesn't hang. 13.♘bd2 ♗e6 14.♗xe6 fxe6 when Black has little to complain about in this symmetrical structure with all eight pawns on the board. This was played in: ½-½ (30) Alekseenko,K (2674)-Grischuk,A (2759) Douglas 2019;

10...d5!? is another interesting alternative. After 11.exd5 ♘xd5 12.♗xa7 ♖xa7 Black wants to play ...♘f4 with a good game;

10...♗e6 was possible, in fact. After 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.♗xa7 ♖xa7 13.♘bd2 ♘h5 Black had a normal position in the game: 0-1 (28) Chigaev,M (2644)-Abdusattorov,N (2608) chess24.com INT 2020.

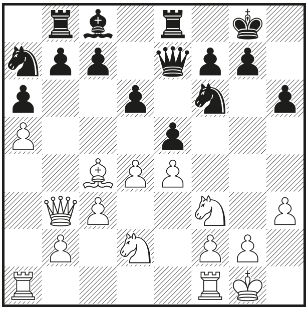
11.♕b3 ♕e7?!



This is too slow. Black defends f7 and plans ...♖b8 (to defend b7) and ...♗e6, but White obtains time to finish development and advance in the centre.

The immediate 11...♗e6 was possible and much better. However, Black had to foresee that after 12.♗xe6 ♖xe6 13.♕xb7 he should play 13...d5! and obtain good compensation. For example, 14.exd5?! *(14.♗xa7 is safer for White 14...♖xa7 15.♕b3 dxe4 16.dxe4 ♘xe4, regaining the pawn with a good position.)* 14...♘xd5 15.♗c1 *(15.♗xa7? ♖xa7 16.♕b3 ♘f4* gives Black a close-to-winning advantage with threats like ...♕xd3 and ...♖g6*)* 15...♗b6! trapping the queen after 16.axb6 cxb6 17.♖xa6 ♖b8.

12.♘bd2 ♖b8 13.♗xa7 ♘xa7 14.d4!



Central strategy! White has the better position so he correctly avoids unnecessary complications.

It was possible to take the pawn with 14.♗xa6 but things become murky after 14...♗xh3 15.♗xb7 ♗e6!, forcing 16.c4 to weaken the d4-square. Now, after 16...♗c8 17.a6 ♗xb7 18.axb7 ♘c6 with ideas like ...♘d8 to attack the pawn on b7 and allow for ...c5 and ...♘c6-d4 with compensation for the pawn.

14...♘c6 15.♖fe1 The immediate 15.d5 was also good.

15...♗d7 16.d5! Forcing the knight back to a7.

16...♘a7 17.♗f1 White's plan is simple: he wants to advance on the queenside. Black, on the other hand, has

> *As usual with late replacements, the new players Andrey Esipenko and Radoslav Wojtaszek achieved excellent results*

a problematic knight on a7 that cannot find its way back to the game easily and lacks any counterplay. Nakamura tries to organise the ...f5 push but this only opens the game for the better-developed side.

17...♘h7 18.c4 ♘g5 Exchanges favour the side with less space, but this manoeuvre doesn't stop White's straightforward play.

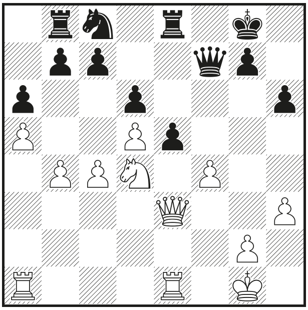
19.♕e3 ♘xf3+ 20.♘xf3 ♘c8 21.b4 f5 Ideally Black would like to play ...♕f6 and ...♘e7, but there is no time for that.

22.♗d3 One of the possible moves. Esipenko's choice shows a central preference.

22.b5 would have shown a flank preference and, in fact, it would have been better. For example, 22...♕f6 23.bxa6 bxa6 24.♖ab1 ♘e7. Black has managed to get the knight to be able to recapture ...♘xf5, but his queenside collapses after 25.♖xb8 ♖xb8 26.♕a7 with both pawns on c7 and a6 hanging when the rook moves from b8.

22...♕f6 23.exf5 Continuing the central strategy, though 23.b5 was again preferable.

23...♗xf5 24.♗xf5 ♕xf5 25.♘d4 ♕f7 26.f4?



A mistake that went unnoticed. Here the central strategy, using the pin on the e-file in order to undermine Black's central structure, could have backfired.

The natural 26.♘e6 was better, though after 26...c6 27.♕d2 cxd5 28.cxd5 ♘e7 29.♖ad1 ♘g6 with the idea ...♘f8 Black wants to get rid of the annoying knight and then his position would be tolerable.

26...c6? Nakamura was proud of this move as he believed it was the best. In fact, it loses and he completely missed the saving resource.

26...♘b6! was missed by both players. Black connects the rooks and threatens the knight on d4 and the pawn on c4. Black is now out of trouble. 27.axb6 exd4 28.♕xd4 cxb6 29.♕xb6 ♕xf4 and the position is just equal: Black has enough counterplay against White's king or the exposed pawns on the fourth rank.

27.fxe5 cxd5 28.e6 By this point, both players were in extreme time-trouble, playing with only 1-2 minutes left (plus the 30-second increment) to reach move 40.

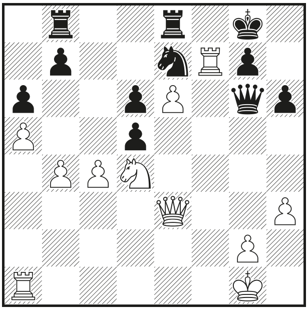
28.♕g3! was even stronger. After 28... dxe5 29.♖xe5 ♖xe5 30.♕xe5 ♖a8 31.♖f1; the difference in the activity of the pieces is decisive.

28...♕g6 29.♖f1 Esipenko goes for the direct attack. In a must win situation he must have felt it was time to cash in.

29.cxd5 ♘e7 30.♕b3 kept a stable advantage - the protected passed pawn on e6 is an extra pawn and a major asset, though Black can hope that its blockade will make it difficult for White to make progress.

29...♘e7 29...dxc4 was the correct move-order. Now in case of 30.♖f7 ♘e7 31.♖af1, we have a transposition, but without allowing White the extra possibility on the next move.

30.♖f7?



30.cxd5! was correct. After 30...♘xd5, 31.♕e2 - intending to play ♖ae1, ♖f7 and ♘f5. White would have kept control and the winning advantage.

30...dxc4 Now Black obtains counterplay.

31.♖af1 ♔h8 This is not the best, but it doesn't endanger Black just yet.

31...♕g5! was correct, harassing the queen. White cannot afford an endgame now as Black has his own passed pawns and, using the threat of exchanging, Black can prevent White from consolidating and continuing the attack. For example, 32.♕f3 ♕e5, attacking the knight, 33.♕g4 ♕g5 - again offering the exchange of queens. 34.♕e2 ♕e5 and so on - White has no advantage.

32.♖1f3 Threatening ♖g3.

32...♘c6? A losing mistake.

32...♘d5! again playing against the queen and activating his pieces was the key to Black's defence: 33.♕f2 ♕e4 34.♖g3 ♖g8 is murky, but Black is not worse.

33.♘xc6 bxc6 34.e7 Black is paralysed now, though with little time left it is not easy for White to find the way to crash through.

34...♔h7 35.♕f4 Threatening ♖g3.

35.♖f8 was also quite good. Black cannot move much 35...d5 36.♖3f7 ♖bc8 37.♕e5 with the threat of taking on g7: 37...c3 38.♖xg7+! ♕xg7 39.♕f5+ ♕g6 40.♖f7+ ♔h8 41.♕xg6 with mate on h7 to follow.

35...♖g8 36.♖g3 This is still fine, but I got the impression that Esipenko couldn't control his impulses. He wanted to end the game but couldn't calculate a direct win.

36.♕xc4! would have been decisive. Not only because the move is good, but because it would have shown his opponent that he is totally dominating and that Black cannot move at all while White can collect pawns at his leisure.

36...♕e6 37.♖e3 ♕g6 38.♖f8 Taking on c4 was still very strong.

38...♖e8 39.♖xg8 ♔xg8 40.♕xc4+ White finally takes on c4 but he has exchanged his active rook on f8 for Black's passive one. He is still winning, but it's not trivial any more.

40...♕f7 41.♕xa6 The queen endgame is winning for White, but Esipenko spent most of his remaining 30 minutes here and it was clear that he couldn't calculate everything until the end. It was much better to play some forced moves first and then spend time thinking later on. This sub-optimal time management led to his blunder when he was already low on time.

41.♕e6! was the impossible-to-find winning move. White wants to keep the pawn on e7 and threatens to take on d6. The hidden idea is that the rook endgame after 41...♕xe6 42.♖xe6 ♔f7 43.♖xd6 ♖xe7 44.♖xc6 ♖e4 45.♖b6 is winning for White as he simply walks over to the queenside with his king. Black must keep his rook on the fourth rank to have the b4-pawn attacked at all times in order to prevent ♖xa6, thus making his rook unable to prevent the white king from marching to the queenside.

41...♖xe7 42.♖xe7 ♕xe7 43.♕xc6 Again natural, but it seems that White cannot win any more now.

43.♕c8+! ♔f7 44.♕xc6 was better, a subtlety not easy to grasp. 44...♕e1+ 45.♔h2 ♕xb4 46.a6 threatening ♕b7 with check: 46...♕f4+ 47.g3 ♕d4 *(the other defence that Black had in the game 47...♕d2+ 48.♕g2 ♕a5 here doesn't work again because of the king on f7: 49.♕f2+ is with check now and the pawn advances: 49...♔g8 50.a7)* 48.♕g2 and if now Black plays the same move as in the game 48...d5 White has 49.♕a2, threatening both a7 and, if 49...♕a7, 50.♕xd5+ is with check. Impossible stuff for humans.

43...♕e1+ 44.♔h2 ♕xb4 45.♕d5+ 45.a6 ♕f4+ 46.g3 ♕d2+ 47.♕g2 ♕a5 and White cannot make progress.

45...♔h8 46.♕a2 ♕f4+ 47.g3 ♕d4 48.a6 ♕a7 49.h4 d5 Black also has a passed pawn and he can use it for counterplay.

50.♕e2 ♕d4 51.♕a2 ♕a7 52.♔g2 d4 53.♕e2 White misses Black's defence based on the advance of the d-pawn, but the position was drawn anyway.

53...♕d7 54.♕e4 d3! 55.♕b7 ♕d8 It was funny to see Nakamura marching up and down the playing hall fist-pumping and smiling radiantly after he played this move.

56.a7 d2 57.a8♕ d1♕ 58.♕xd8+

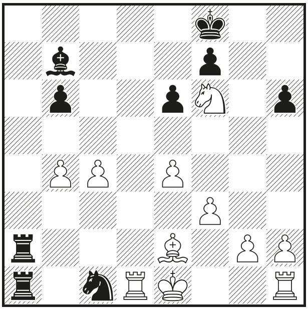
½-½

In the absence of Ding Liren, the favourite to qualify from **Pool B** was Richard Rapport, the world number 10. Rapport, however, immediately started with a loss to the last-minute replacement Wojtaszek. He managed to get back by beating Fedoseev in the next round, his king march in that game was a superb flight of imagination.

Rapport was not up to his usual standard and he kept missing his chances

Richard **Rapport** – Vladimir 3 **Fedoseev**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Pool B Berlin GER (2.2)



Black sacrificed material for counterplay on the queenside and White seems tied down. Rapport comes up with an ingenious idea.

24.♔f2!! White sacrifices a piece in order to march his king to h4 and start an attack against Black's king! Amazing! The computer kills off all enthusiasm, claiming that now the position is equal, but that shouldn't stop us from admiring the beauty of the idea.

24.♗f1 is the materialistic approach preferred by the engine, claiming that White is better. After 24...♘d3+ 25.♗xd3 ♖xd1+ 26.♔xd1 ♖a1+ 27.♔e2 ♖xh1 28.♘d7+ ♔e7 29.♘xb6 ♖xh2 30.♔f2: the two connected passed pawns should give White a winning advantage.

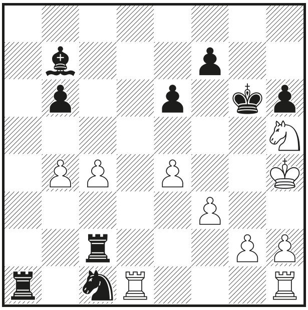
24...♖xe2+ 25.♔g3 ♖c2 26.♔h4 The king is entirely safe now and also defends the knight on h5 when it comes there. White's plan now is to play for mate after ♖d8, e5 and ♘h5 (in various orders).

26...♔g7? 26...♖xc4 was best according to the engine, allowing a further march of the white king 27.♔h5! ♖c2; this to-ing and fro-ing with the rook is insane, but apparently they are the best moves: 28.♔xh6 ♖xg2 29.e5 threatening ♖d8-e8 mate 29...♖a8 30.♖xc1 ♗xf3 with a messy position that the engine happily says is all zeroes.

27.♘h5+? This was the envisaged set-up with the king on h4, but the other knight check led to a win, while this allows Black to return to the saving line with ...♖xc4 as in the last note.

27.♘e8+! ♔f8 28.♘d6 ♗c6 29.b5! ♗d7 30.e5 ♔e7 31.f4 and this should be winning for White but this is not immediately obvious at all.

27...♔g6?



Black should have gone back to f8, when White could repeat the position.

27...♔f8 28.♖d8+ is another attempt, but Black has 28...♔e7 29.♖hd1 ♗d5! - the only move to stay in the game. 30.♖b8 ♖a8, keeping the equilibrium in a sharp endgame after 31.♖xb6 ♗xc4 32.♖b7+ ♔f8, and here a pretty perpetual arises after 33.♖xf7+! ♔xf7 34.♖d7+ ♔f8 35.♘f6 with the ♘h7-f6 mechanism.

28.♖d8 Now White is winning.

28...♖a8 29.♖hd1 ♖xc4 30.♖xa8 ♗xa8 31.♖d8 Threatening both ♖xa8 and ♖g8 with ♘f6 mate next. Fedoseev may have pinned his hopes on his next move, but Rapport had the refutation ready.

31...♗xe4 32.g4! The only winning move, keeping the threat of ♖g8 and ♘f6.

32...♔h7 33.fxe4 Still threatening mate with e5, ♘f6 and ♖g8, so Black's next is forced.

33...e5 34.♘f6+ ♔g6 35.♖d6 White already has a technically winning endgame as his pieces are much better coordinated than Black's. He converted without too many problems in 52 moves.

1-0

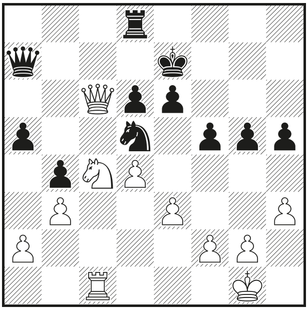
Unfortunately, Rapport couldn't build upon his success. In the next games, his play was not up to his usual standard and he kept missing his chances, although he still stayed in contention.

Both games in the last round were crucial: outsider Oparin was facing Wojtaszek and Fedoseev was facing Rapport, with Wojtaszek and Fedoseev standing half a point ahead of Rapport.

The first game was full of ups and downs and eventually ended in a draw, while Fedoseev seemed to have everything under control - a safe position with the possibility of taking a draw at any point he wished.

Vladimir 3 **Fedoseev** - Richard **Rapport**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Pool B Berlin GER (6.2)



The control passed and White has maintained the controlled grip over the position that he had since the start of the game. With a draw in hand Fedoseev was looking over the game Oparin-Wojtaszek, where things were going up and down, but eventually it was drawn. This meant that with a draw Fedoseev would play a tie-break for qualification to the semi-finals with Wojtaszek, while a win would secure that qualification outright. In case of a loss, then Rapport would play a tie-break with Wojtaszek. But how can possibly Black win here?

43.♖e1? This is a very natural move, preparing the e4-push and opening the e-file.It's difficult to believe this as White has a super-safe position so how can a sensible move that doesn't blunder anything be a decisive mistake? I think that Fedoseev was also under the same impression that things are safe and nothing can happen to him, but there are hidden dangers in the position that Rapport saw and Fedoseev didn't.

43.a3 was another sensible move that gets rid of a potential weakness. Now after 43...♕a8 44.♕xa8 ♖xa8 45.♖a1! White threatens to open the a-file and target the a-pawn. The position remains balanced.

Even a move like 43.g3, which keeps the rook on the c-file, was fine. After 43...♕a8 44.♘b6! ♕xc6 45.♖xc6 White is perfectly OK.

43...♕a8! 44.♕xa8 ♖xa8 And all of a sudden White is in serious trouble. His problem is that Black threatens ...a4 and ...♘c3, and he has problems defending his queenside.

45.a4 Trying to lock the queenside and fix the pawn on a5, but even this doesn't save White.

45...♘f6! Threatening ...d5, to get rid of the knight on c4 that targets the pawn on a5 and keeps the c-file closed.

46.♖c1 ♖c8 Now ...d5 wins a piece, so the rook on c1 must move.

47.♖b1 d5 48.♘e5 48.♘xa5 ♖c7! traps the knight and Black will collect it after ...♔d6 and ...♖a7.

48...♖c3 With a dominating endgame that Rapport converted in 76 moves.

0-1

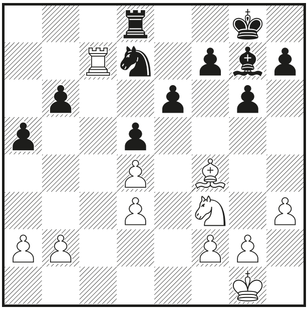
An unbelievable turnaround!

This meant that Wojtaszek and Rapport had to play a tie-break (of two rapid games followed by two blitz games and an Armageddon) for the qualification to the semi-finals.

The most predetermined group was **Pool C**, where nobody could compete with the rampant Aronian. He showed excellent preparation and calculation with no issues in the conversion phase. Here's a sadistic example against Germany's brightest hope.

Levon **Aronian** – Vincent **Keymer**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Pool C Berlin GER (3.2)



White has a winning advantage, but how to win? Black has everything defended so he can just sit and wait, right?

25.♖b7! Tying Black down even further. Now the knight on d7 cannot move as that would lose the pawn on b6.

25...♔f8 Black's king rushes to the defence of the knight on d7 so that he can activate his rook.

26.♗d6+ ♔e8 27.♘e5! Forcing favourable exchanges.

27...♗xe5 Exchanging the knight leads to the collapse of the queenside: 27...♘xe5 28.dxe5 ♗f8 29.♗c7 and the queenside pawns will be lost.

28.dxe5 ♖c8 Black gets the open file but he cannot do much on it because the rook cannot leave the c-file.

29.d4 ♔d8 29...♖c2 is met by the same move as in the game: 30.♖a7, threatening ♖a8.

30.♖a7! Making sure Black can never leave the c-file as then a check from a8 would win the knight.

30...♖c4 31.b3 ♖c1+ 32.♔h2 h6 Black can only wait. But he still has everything defended, so again, how does White win? The answer is by preparing a breakthrough on the kingside.

33.♔g3 ♖c3+ 34.f3 ♖c6 35.h4 ♖c8 35...h5 36.♔f4 allows for ♔g5, g4 etc.

36.h5 ♖c6 36...g5 37.f4 gxf4+ 38.♔xf4 followed by g4-g5 creates a passed h-pawn.

37.♔h4 ♖c8 38.g4 ♔e8 38...g5+ 39.♔g3 with f4 next.

39.f4 ♔d8 40.hxg6 fxg6 41.g5 A matter of taste, as the immediate 41.f5 was also strong.

41...h5 42.f5! Whichever way Black recaptures, White will push the passed pawn forward, winning material.

1-0

In **Pool D** the fight for qualification was between the two American players. It appeared that So would qualify as he was leading confidently, but he missed a win in the last round against Harikrishna while Dominguez managed a last-round win against Shirov to stage a tie-break.

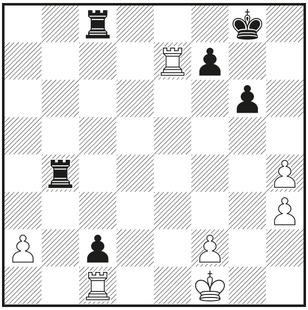
THE TIE-BREAKS

The tie-breaks were decided in the rapid games, with thbe two matches having a different character.

The first game of the Wojtaszek-Rapport match was decided in a double-rook endgame where White was a little hesitant on how to make the draw.

Radoslaw **Wojtaszek** – Richard **Rapport**

FIDE GP 1 Pool B TB Berlin GER (1)



The game should have been drawn earlier, but both sides kept on playing. Here White shouldn't have problems neutralising and capturing the c2-pawn, but he became hesitant.

32.♔e2 32.♖e2 was the most direct way. White ties down Black's rooks to the defence of the c2-pawn and then uses his a-pawn as a decoy, eventually resulting in its exchange for the c2-pawn. 32...♖b1 33.♖ee1 ♖b2 34.a4 ♖a2 35.♖e2 ♔g7 36.a5 and when the a-pawn reaches a8 Black will be forced to take it, which would lead to the loss of the pawn on c2.

32...♖xh4 33.♖e3 ♖a4 34.a3 ♔g7 35.♔d2 ♖f4 36.f3?! The first step in the wrong direction, but it should still be a draw.

36.♔e2 was simple, as the rook on the third rank defends both pawns on a3 and h3.

36...♖fc4 37.♖b3 Now the decoy idea doesn't work: 37.a4 ♖xa4 38.♖xc2 ♖d4+ 39.♔c1 *(39.♖d3 ♖xd3+ 40.♔xd3 ♖xc2 41.♔xc2 ♔f6 with the king marching to h4 leads to a winning pawn endgame for Black.)* 39...♖cd8 and, with a cut-off king, White will find it difficult to defend his kingside.

37...♖4c5 38.a4 ♔h6 The king activation poses difficult problems for White, especially as he was quite low on time already.

39.♖a3?! White wants to push his passed pawn, but it was better to move the king towards the kingside.

39.♔e2 ♔g5 40.♔f2 holding the defence on both wings.

39...♔g5 40.♖a2? 40.a5? is too slow now: 40...♖d5+ 41.♔e2 ♔f4, with the threat of ...♖e8 and ...♖d2, wins for Black.

40.♔e3 was the only move to stay in the game, preventing ...♔f4. 40...f5 41.♔f2 brings the king to defend the kingside and even though White is worse he should be able to draw.

40...♖d5+ With the white rooks out of the game his king is left at the mercy of all Black's pieces.

41.♔e3 ♖e8+ 42.♔f2 ♖d2+ 43.♔g3 ♖ee2 The difference in the piece activity clearly shows that Black is winning.

44.f4+ ♔f5 Going to h5 was even faster.

45.♖b2 This blunders into mate, but White is lost anyway.

45...♖d3+ 46.♔h4 g5+! 46...g5+! 47.fxg5 ♖e4+ 48.♔h5 ♖xh3# is a pretty mate.

0-1

Holding the draw with White was not a problem for Rapport as he never allowed any serious chances.

So didn't get anything in the Queen's Gambit Accepted in the first game against Dominguez and everything was decided in the time scramble in the second game.

Leinier **Dominguez Perez** - Wesley **So**

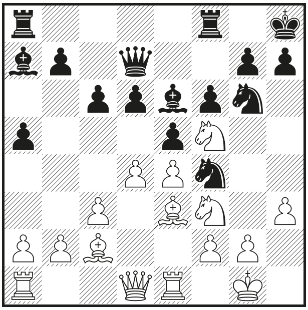
FIDE GP 1 Pool D TB Berlin GER (2)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 Dominguez repeats the Italian Giuoco Piano from the game he lost against the same opponent in the group stage.

3...♘f6 4.d3 ♗c5 5.0-0 0-0 6.h3 d6 7.c3 a5 8.♖e1 ♗e6 9.♗b5 ♗a7 10.♘bd2 ♘e7 11.d4 ♘g6 12.♗a4 ♘h5 13.♘f1 ♘hf4 14.♘g3 All this had beenplayed between the same opponents several days earlier. In spite of winning that game convincingly, it is So who deviates first.

14...c6 14...exd4 was his choice in the classical game. After 15.♘xd4 ♗xd4! 16.cxd4 d5 17.♕f3 ♕f6 Black had good play, but undoubtedly Dominguez was ready to come up with an improvement. 0-1 (39) Dominguez Perez,L (2752)-So,W (2772) Berlin GER 2022.

15.♗c2 ♕d7 16.♘f5 f6 17.♗e3 ♔h8?!



So spent quite some time thinking here. After the game he said he started to doubt his preparation of the plan with ...c6 and ...f6. Objectively Black is fine though, but he had to remember the correct move.

 7...d5! was the correct move, giving Black sufficient play. 18.♘3h4 *(18.dxe5 ♗xe3 19.♘xe3 fxe5 20.exd5 cxd5 with an unclear position as Black has threats on the kingside.)* 18...dxe4 19.♗xe4 exd4 20.♘xd4 ♘xh4 21.♗xf4 ♗xd4 22.cxd4 ♘g6 Black has control of the blockading square in front of the IQP on d4 and this gives him good play.

18.dxe5! fxe5 19.♘g5 Now White takes over the initiative, though in fact it seems that Black should have tactical chances on the kingside.

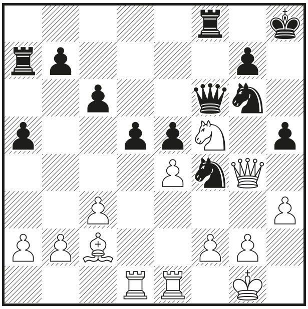
19...d5 20.♘xe6 The engine proposes 20.g3, but, understandably, Dominguez didn't want to weaken his kingside.

20...♕xe6 21.♗xa7 The immediate 21.♕g4 was more precise, as after Black takes on e3 White obtains an advantage after 21...♗xe3 22.fxe3 dxe4 the only way to give the knight on f4 an escape route 23.♗xe4 ♘d5 24.♕g5, when his centralised pieces are much better than the knights, which lack good squares.

21...♖xa7 22.♕g4 ♕f6 22...b5 was better, to allow the rook on a7 to swing to the kingside. The play remains unclear after 23.♖ad1 ♖af7 when both sides are well developed with no clear way forward.

23.♖ad1 Again the engine likes 23.g3, but again we can understand the human not playing it.

23...h5?



So starts to play for tricks, as he said after the game, but there was no need to as his position wasn't desperate for such measures.

23...b5 again was preferable. Things can become very sharp after 24.g3 h5 25.♕f3 ♘xh3+ 26.♔g2 ♘gf4+! 27.gxf4 ♘xf4+ 28.♔g1 g6 29.♘e3 d4 when anything would have been possible, especially bearing in mind that players had little time left on the clock.

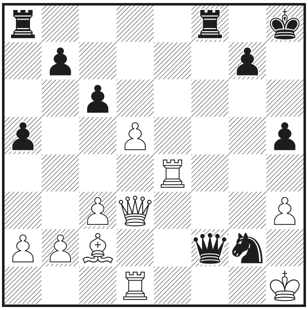
24.♕f3 ♕g5 25.♕g3 ♕f6 26.♔h2 Getting away from possible checks on h3 or e2. It's always better to be safe in time-trouble.

26...♖aa8 27.♕f3 Hitting h5 again.

27...♘h4 Now 27...♕g5 is met by 28.g3 and there is no ...♘xh3+ as the king is already on h2.

28.♘xh4 ♕xh4 29.exd5 ♘xg2 A good practical chance in a lost position.

30.♕d3 e4 31.♖xe4 ♕xf2 32.♔h1



The only move for White. It wins, and everything else loses! Dominguez admitted he didn't see this in advance, saying he was lucky to have this move. To add more drama, he made it with mere seconds left!

32...♘h4 So spent all his remaining time here, but there was nothing he could do.

33.♖xh4 g6 34.♖xh5+! Forcing a mate. A crazy finish!

1-0

On paper it was surprising that So didn't qualify, but Dominguez deserves praise for not giving up in the group stage and keeping his composure in the seconds that decided the winner.

THE SEMI-FINALS

Both semi-finals were decided in the first games.

In a balanced middlegame arising from the Queen's Gambit Declined Nakamura embarked on complications and managed to confuse Rapport, who underestimated the dangers in the ensuing endgame.

Aronian decided on a serve-and-volley strategy that worked like a charm. His serve was the targeted preparation in a very sharp and concrete variation in the Queen's Gambit Accepted and his volley was the conversion of the positional and time advantage that he gained as a result of the powerful serve.

Levon **Aronian** – Leinier **Dominguez Perez**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Playoff Berlin GER (1.1)

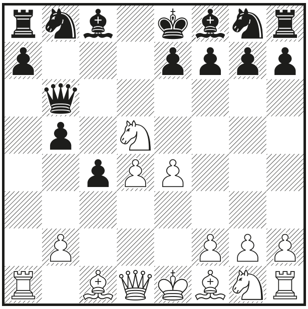
1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 Dominguez successfully used the Queen's Gambit Accepted in his game with So in the group stage. Nakamura also was successful with it against Grischuk, so perhaps this solid opening is coming back in fashion.

3.e4 b5 This move, which can lead to very sharp play, was Dominguez's choice against So.

4.a4 c6 5.axb5 cxb5 6.♘c3 ♕b6 The latest fashion.

Previously the ultra-sharp 6...a6 7.♘xb5 axb5 8.♖xa8 ♗b7 9.♖a1 e6 was explored at large, where Black has certain compensation for the material deficit.

7.♘d5



Aronian starts his rush to the net. This move invites big complications. He trusted his preparation and hoped that Dominguez would not remember his. The other moves hadn't posed serious problems so far.

7.b3 was So's choice, but Black was quickly fine after 7...e6 8.bxc4 ♗b4 9.♗d2 bxc4 10.♘f3 ♘e7 and Black had comfortable development in the game: ½-½ (34) So,W (2772)-Dominguez Perez,L (2752) Berlin GER 2022; 7.♗e2 was another recent attempt: 7...e6 8.♘h3 ♗b7 9.0-0 ♘f6 10.e5 ♘d5 again with a good position for Black in: ½-½ (36) Duda,J (2760)-Karjakin,S (2743) Wijk aan Zee NED 2022.

7...♕b7 8.♗f4 Threatening ♘c7.

8...e5 Black opens the a3-f8 diagonal with tempo.

9.♗xe5 ♘d7 10.♗f4 ♘gf6 11.♘c7+ ♔d8 12.♘xa8 ♕xe4+ 13.♘e2 ♕xa8 The smoke somewhat cleared and we have a messy position where Black has a pawn and smooth development for the exchange. His main problem in the king stuck in the centre, but he hopes that with good central control he won't allow White to get close.

14.f3 This is the moment when Dominguez started to invest a lot of time in his moves. This is one of the two main engine recommendations; the slightly-preferred alternative was 14.♘c3, so quite possibly Dominguez was either on his own here or was trying to recollect his preparation against the 'second best' choice.

Levon Aronian showed excellent preparation and calculation skills

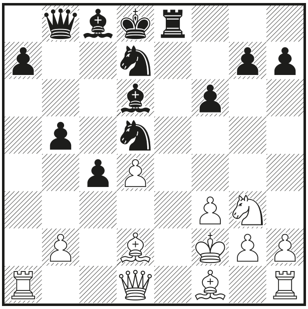
14...♘d5 15.♗g5+ The alternative is going back to d2 immediately, but Aronian was blitzing out his moves while Dominguez was spending more and more time.

15...f6 After the game I overheard Aronian tell Dominguez that the engine here proposed playing 15...♘7f6, but both moves seem fine.

16.♗d2 ♗d6 17.♘g3 ♕b8 18.♔f2 Still played fast, but perhaps Aronian bluffed with this one, mixing things up a bit?

18.♗e2 ♗xg3+ 19.hxg3 ♕xg3+ 20.♔f1 is what the engine proposes.

18...♖e8?!



Dominguez was already an hour behind the clock. This move is a natural one that one makes when playing alone. However, it gives White just the time he needs to complete development and get his king to the safety of the corner. Perhaps this is what Aronian was hoping for - that a player not in his preparation and with a propensity to long thoughts would not to be able to find the precise ...♗c7-b6 manoeuvreand would prefer a natural developing move? If that is true, we must admit that he was spot on and that the risk paid off hundred percent.

The engine proposes the bishop transfer to b6 immediately: 18...♗c7! with the idea of ...♗b6, an idea Dominguez also arrived at but with the extra move ...♖e8, which gave White the time to evacuate the king from the centre. 19.♘e4 ♗b6 20.♗a5 White must exchange the dark-squared bishop as the pressure on d4 is too unpleasant. 20...♗xa5 21.♖xa5 ♕b6 22.♖a1 f5 23.♘c3 ♘7f6 gives Black an excellent position with central control over the light squares and queenside majority that can start to move forward.

19.♗e2 White's plan is ♖e1 and ♔g1-h1.

19...♗c7 Already this is too slow.

19...a6 20.♖e1 ♘7b6 21.♔g1 h5! is an engine suggestion that keeps Black in the game. Aronian also mentioned the h-pawn march as an idea for Black in these positions.

20.♖e1 ♗b6 21.♔g1! Dominguez admitted that he was very disappointed when he realised he couldn't take on d4 here, his entire idea of ...♗c7-b6 thus proving a waste of time.

21...♘e5 21...♗xd4+? 22.♔h1 opens the d-file in White's favour and now the position of the king on d8 becomes a very dangerous one. After 22...♗b6 23.♕c2 g6 24.♘e4 White is slowly activating his pieces and will develop an attack on the king stuck in the centre.

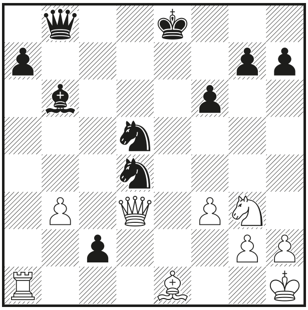
21...♕e5 was the lesser evil, though White is better after 22.♗a5 ♕f4 23.♗xb6+ axb6 24.b3 opening up the game.

22.♔h1 With his king safe White is now ready to start play against Black's king on the d-file.

22...♘c6 23.b3 Opening the game.

23...c3 24.♗xb5 ♗d7 25.♖xe8+ ♗xe8 26.♗e1 26.♗xc6 ♗xc6 27.♗e1 was an alternative, keeping the d4-pawn.

26...♘xd4 27.♗xe8 c2 28.♕d3 ♔xe8



29.♗d2? Aronian played this quickly, but quite surprisingly it throws away the advantage.

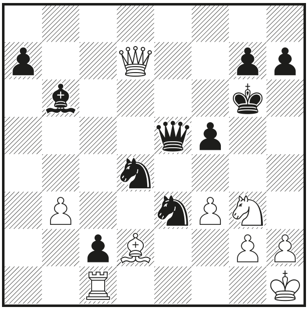
29.♘e2! was best, immediately getting rid of one of the centralised knights. After 29...♕e5 30.♘xd4 ♗xd4 31.♖c1 ♘e3 32.♗f2 White will eliminate both the knight on e3 and the pawn on c2.

29...♕e5 30.♖c1 f5! The position is unclear now as Black's centralised pieces prevent White from untangling and dealing with the pawn on c2.

31.♕c4 ♘e3? Low on time, Dominguez misses his chance. Now Black is lost and Aronian makes no mistakes.

31...f4! 32.♘e4 ♘e3 creates an impressive dark-square domination for Black as his pieces are untouchable. White cannot break through this concentration of forces. 33.♕g8+ ♔d7 going to e7 would be bad in view of ♗b4+. 34.♗b4 ♘e2 and White has nothing better than to return the exchange after 35.♕f7+ ♔c6 36.♖xc2+ ♘xc2 37.♕c4+ ♔d7 38.♕f7+ with a perpetual check, as taking on c2 allows a mate from a1.

32.♕c8+ ♔f7 33.♕d7+ ♔g6



34.f4! The key move, disrupting the harmony of the black pieces.

34...♕e6 34...♕xf4? 35.♕e8+ wins the knight on e3.

35.♕xe6+ ♘xe6 36.♘e2 Defending the pawn on f4. Soon enough White will win the pawn on c2 and remain a full exchange up.

36...♘g4 37.g3 ♘c5 38.b4 ♘d3 39.♖xc2 ♘gf2+ 40.♔g2 ♘e4 41.♘c1

1-0

In the second games neither Dominguez nor Rapport could pose any significant problems and the games were drawn without much excitement.

THE AMERICAN FINAL

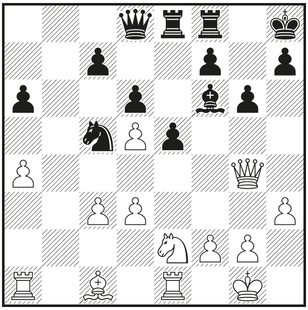
It has to be said that the best players made it to the final, though in different ways. Aronian was his best smooth self, playing his trademark 'chess with confidence' and breezing to the final without any problems whatsoever.

Nakamura was the wrestler who endured scares, but emerged victorious from them because he was the better fighter.

The first game of the final was in a way typical. Aronian was the better-prepared player and when Nakamura tried to improvise and that backfired Aronian found himself a clear pawn up. But then the fighter in Nakamura woke up and, coupled with Aronian's becoming a bit too relaxed, he obtained counterplay and didn't allow any winning chances. The game was also curious as it shows us what the elite players mean when they say they 'missed' something.

Hikaru **Nakamura** - Levon **Aronian**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Playoff Berlin GER (2.1)



Black has no problems here, with the better structure and well-placed pieces. Nakamura embarks on a tactical operation.

22.♗h6 22.♕c4 was the alternative. After 22...e4 23.♘g3 exd3 *(or 23...♘xd3 24.♖xe4 which is fine for White.)* 24.♗e3 White wants to take on c5 and d3, with an equal position.

22...♘xd3! Played quickly by Aronian. I was impressed how fast he was in seeing all the underlying variations.

23.♗xf8 Nakamura quickly realised what he'd missed and played this also relatively fast.

Of course, the initial idea and the reason why he thought he could play 22.♗h6 was 23.♖ed1, as it appears that White wins an exchange. However, what Nakamura missed was that Black can play 23...e4! 24.♗xf8 h5! This was the move that escaped Nakamura's attention. The queen has only one square to go to: 25.♕g3 ♗h4! 26.♕h2 - again the only square not to lose the queen 26...♗xf2+

27.♔h1 ♖xf8, with a winning position for Black.

23...♘xe1 24.♖xe1?! This is sub-optimal.

24.♗h6 ♘d3 25.♕c4 ♘c5 26.♗e3 offered better chances as the threat is to take the knight on c5 and then the pawn on a6 or c5 (after ...dxc5).

24...♖xf8 With a clear pawn up for Black.

½-½

……

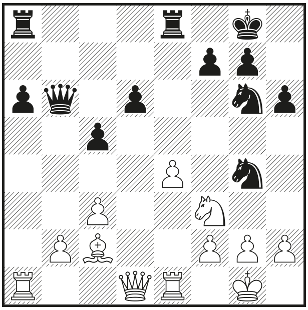
Missing things in elite chess is rarely on the surface; it is always in some sub-variation 2-3 moves deep. That is what makes it difficult to reach that level: the player must be vigilant constantly not only about what happens on the board, but also on the possibilities at several-moves depth. And they have to do this for many moves and hours without a single break.

In the second game Aronian played 1.e4 and opted for the Giuoco Piano, perhaps hoping for similar luck to Esipenko's against Nakamura. But this time Nakamura was well-prepared and after a few interesting moments the game ended in a repetition after a mere two hours of play.

In this game we also had an example of 'missing things', only this time it was Aronian's turn.

Levon **Aronian** - Hikaru **Nakamura**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Playoff Berlin GER (2.2)



> *Nakamura was well prepared. Coupled with his solid repertoire, he avoided big blunders and didn't lose a game in the whole tournament*

22.♘d2? Aronian played this move with the (mistaken) belief that the pawn on b2 was taboo.

22.♖a2 was his post-game suggestion, when he understood that White would be somewhat better.

22...♕xb2! Nakamura precisely calculated that he could take the pawn. So what did Aronian miss?

23.♘c4 23.♖b1 was Aronian's intended refutation. However,... 23...♕xc3 24.♖b3 here he thought that White is winning as the knight on g4 falls, but he missed that Black has 24...♕d4! - maintaining the attack on the knight on d2 (and attacking f2) so White doesn't win a piece. After the game he called this 'a stupid blunder'.

23...♕xc3 24.♘b6 ♖ab8 25.♘d5 ♕b2 The only move (as 25...♕c4 loses to 26.♖a4 and the knight on g4 is lost) to latch onto the bishop on c2. Now the game ends in a repetition.

26.♖b1 ♕a2 27.♖a1 ♕b2 28.♖b1 ♕a2 29.♖a1 ♕b2

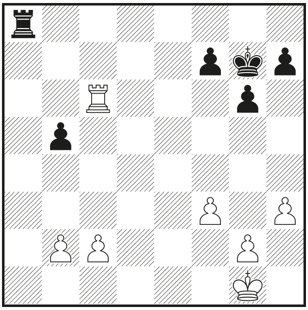
½-½

The winner was decided in the rapid tie-break.

In the first game Nakamura managed to obtain a favourable endgame after Aronian misplayed his preparation. The favourable endgame transposed to a winning rook endgame when the drama started.

Hikaru **Nakamura** - Levon **Aronian**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Playoff Berlin GER (2.3)



White is winning here as the constant threat to capture the pawn on b5 and obtain connected passed pawns leaves Black's rook passive.

32...♖d8 33.g4 The first surprise. While observing the game I thought the simplest plan was to play b4, c3 and ♖c5, which would force the black rook to keep an eye on the pawn on c3, and then simply walk with the king towards the queenside. Still, this doesn't endanger the win.

To illustrate: 33.b4 ♖d2 34.♖c5 h5 *(or 34...♖d4 35.c3 ♖d1+ 36.♔f2 ♖c1 37.♔e3 with the king coming to d2 or d3 when White wins the pawn on b5 and obtains two connected passed pawns.)* 35.h4! it's important to stop ...h4 as when the white king goes to the kingside and Black takes on g2 there is no counterplay against the pawn on h3 35...♔f6 36.c3 ♖c2 37.♔h2 White activates the king without the need to sacrifice the pawn on g2 just yet 37...♔e6 38.♔g3 ♔f6 39.♔f4 now it's possible, as after 39...♖xg2 if Black doesn't take White can play g3 or g4 and then go with the king to d3. 40.♖xb5: the two connected passed pawns win in 'automation mode' with ♖c5, c4, b5, ♖c6, b6, c5, ♖c7 etc. while Black has no counterplay on the kingside.

33...♖d2 34.h4? If the previous move was surprising, then this one was doubly so. I couldn't understand why Nakamura would push on the kingside when the plan on the other side was clear.

34.b4 was natural and good: 34...h5 *(in case of 34...g5 35.c3 ♖c2 36.♔f1 the king walks to d1, chases away the rook from c2 and White wins the pawn on b5.)* 35.♖c5 h4 36.g5! was the only move he had to see, to fix Black's kingside, when has also has the idea of playing c4 and, after the exchange on c4 the rook on the fourth rank, attacks the pawn on h4.

34...h5! Now Black should be able to draw as he will have counterplay against the pawn on h4.

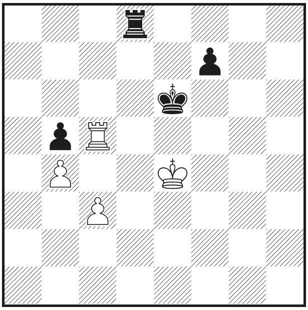
35.gxh5 gxh5 36.b4 Too late! But the twists and turns don't end here.

36...♖d4 37.c3 ♖xh4 38.♔g2 Judging by his reactions, Nakamura missed the fact that, after 38.♖c5 ♔g6 39.♖xb5 ♖c4 40.♖c5 the pawn endgame is actually a draw after 40...♖xc5 41.bxc5 ♔f5, as Black is just in time to eliminate both c-pawns and return after the f3-pawn.

38...♖f4 39.♔g3 39.♖c5 ♔g6 40.♖xb5 ♖c4 41.♖c5 ♖xc5 42.bxc5 ♔f5 here White is a tempo up compared to the previous comment, but again the pawn endgame is a draw!

39...♖f5 40.f4 h4+ Black eliminates one more pair of pawns. The position is a draw, but the danger of losing the b5-pawn and allowing White two connected passed pawns is still present and this makes the defence tricky. In addition to this, both players were already down to a few minutes plus the 10-second increment.

41.♔xh4 ♖xf4+ 42.♔g5 ♖f3 43.♔g4 ♖d3 44.♖c5 ♔f6 45.♔f4 ♔e6 46.♔e4 ♖d8??



Panic. He played this with only a few seconds left!

Simplest was to keep an eye on the pawn on c3 with 46...♖h3 and, if White approaches 47.♔d4, then side checks force the king all the way to b3 47...♖h4+ 48.♔d3 ♖h3+ 49.♔c2 ♖h2+ 50.♔b3 - and now Black can start to push his f-pawn 50...f5 51.♖xb5 f4, with sufficient counterplay for draw.

47.♖xb5 White is winning again.

47...♖d1 It was clear that losing time like this, going to d8 first and now to d1, couldn't be good for Black, but objectively nothing changes the evaluation.

48.♖b6+ I was expecting the 'automation mode' with 48.♖c5 followed by b5, c4, ♖c6 etc.

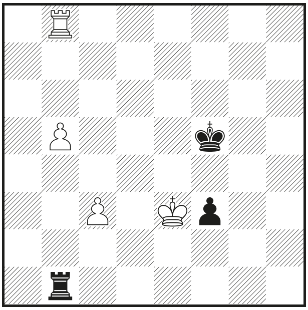
48...♔d7 49.♖f6 Around here I got the impression that Nakamura was fiddling too much. He was trying to win without allowing anything when there was no need for such an approach. Simply pushing the pawns was more than enough.

49...♔e7 50.♖f3 50.♖c6 followed by b5, c4 was the 'automation mode'.

50...♔e6 51.♖d3 f5+ 52.♔d4 ♖b1 53.♖e3+ I expected the simple 53.♔c5 when the pawns march forward with the help of the king.

53...♔f6 54.♖e8 f4 55.♖b8? I couldn't understand what Nakamura was trying to achieve. Why not 55.♔c5 and just push? With this empty move he simply gives Black a free move to advance the king. I had the impression that he hadn't read Fine (or Dvoretsky - of course he did, but in these tense moments that knowledge didn't come to the fore) and as the Soviets would say he lacked schooling - one of the basic principles of rook endgames is that the king should support the pawn(s) and the rook should deal with the opponent's pawn(s). Nakamura does it the other way round and it is not a surprise he completely messes it up.

55...♔f5 56.b5 f3 57.♔e3?



There you go - violation of endgame principles lets the win slip. But Fate was on Nakamura's side...

There was already a single route to victory and that was 57.♖f8+ ♔g4 58.♔e4! - again the only move. Too difficult for the last seconds of a tense game.

57...♖b3 58.♔d3 ♔g4 This also draws, though I thought it was simpler to push the pawn.

In fact it wasn't: 58...f2 59.♖f8+ ♔e5 60.♔c4 *(60.♖xf2 ♖xb5 is a known theoretical draw.)* 60...♖b2 61.♔c5 ♔e6 62.c4 and here the only move to draw is the baffling 62...♖e2!! There is nothing simple here.

59.♔c2 f2?? Now Black spoils it.

59...♖a3 was enough to draw, the king supports the f-pawn and it should suffice, though with seconds left who knows what would have happened...

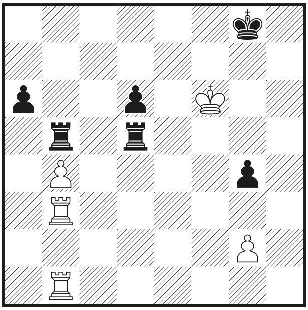
60.♖f8 ♖xb5 61.♖xf2 ♖c5 Aronian lost on time, but this is an elementary win for White.

1-0

In the second game Aronian obtained a promising position after the opening but was too hesitant in the early middlegame. Then he even got some chances in the endgame, but again missed the best chance. The final part of the game was amusing, but only because Aronian was in must-win situation.

Levon **Aronian** - Hikaru **Nakamura**

FIDE Grand Prix 1 Playoff Berlin GER (2.4)



Nakamura offered a draw here, as that result won him the Grand Prix. Aronian decided to continue in spite of being a pawn down with absolutely no chances for anything.

47.♖f1 ♖h5! Nakamura immediately goes after White's king.

48.♖f4? Still trying to keep the game going, but now the king ends up in a mating net.

48.♔g6 ♖hg5+ 49.♔f6 ♖h5 would have been a likely repetition with a draw.

48...♖h6+ 49.♔e7 ♖b7+ 50.♔d8 ♖h8! A cute final move, threatening mate that can only be stopped by giving up a rook, so Aronian resigned.

50...♖h8 51.♖e3 ♔g7+ 52.♖e8 ♖b8+ 53.♔d7 ♖hxe8 wins a full rook for Black.

0-1

Eventually The Streamer (Nakamura) went all the way. He had Fate at his side on a couple of very important occasions, but winners always have that. Nakamura mentioned that after the tournament he had to go back to America because 'he had a job there', so he is still not considering himself a (professional) player.

One moment is worth noting from what he was saying in the press conferences: once he started making money outside of chess (meaning his streaming business) he became much more relaxed and felt no pressure playing chess. And this was the key difference between Nakamura and everybody else - he cared *less* about qualifying or winning and that made him free to play his best chess. The others felt the pressure of the importance of these events, seeing them as their last chance to qualify for the Candidates and this made them too nervous.

Will Nakamura's fairy-tale return continue with a great showing in Berlin in a month's time? Will he qualify for the Candidates? Nobody knows, even Nakamura himself. Fun times lie ahead.

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MAGNUS CARLSEN AND THE MELTWATER CHAMPIONS TOUR

IS THERE A NEW SCHISM LOOMING IN THE CHESS WORLD?

By GM Alex Colovic / alexcolovic.com

By the time you read this, dear reader, the Meltwater Champions Tour will have started its third year of existence, this time under the slogan 'Every.Move.Matters.'

We have a new season with new rules and (some) new players. Let's take a look at the basics first and then delve a bit more deeply into the reason why these events are organised.

When the pandemic shook the world, chess conveniently moved online. Magnus Carlsen's team was quick to take advantage of the situation and found the sponsorship to organise events that would keep the World Champion in shape by ensuring he gets regular practice against the other leading players. And – also to keep the money rolling in.

These rapid events were organised at regular intervals throughout the year and were excellent from many aspects, which I will address in more detail below.

This year's tour is sponsored by several companies and it again bears the name of Meltwater, a Norwegian media company. The format is the following: two regular tournaments are followed by a major and there are three batches of these, totalling nine events. The prize fund is $1.6 million and there are 16 players who will participate in these events.

A notable change in the roster of players is the absence of some well-established names like So and Radjabov and inclusion of young and promising players like Esipenko, Niemann, Praggnanandhaa, Keymer and the World Rapid Champion Abdusattorov. There is also one female player, former World Champion Alexandra Kosteniuk. The winner of the Tour is the one who collects most points based on all nine tournaments.

SO, WHY ARE THESE TOURNAMENTS ORGANISED?

I see several obvious reasons.

They provided entertainment for the masses. With no over-the-board chess events and people forced to stay at home, elite chess was an excellent spectacle to behold. The games were exciting and the various commentary teams provided for explanations for all levels.

They have a lavish prize-fund. Professional chess players live from playing chess, so the best players in the world had a chance to continue to earn by doing what they do best. In truth, there was a very limited number of players who benefited financially from these events, but it was still better to have a few than nobody.

They kept Carlsen in shape. By constantly providing him opportunities to face the best opposition, the World Champion kept practicing high-level chess from his living room (or from a private yacht, as during one of the events). Constant practice is of utmost importance to maintain one's level and the Champion found a way to have it when the rest of the world had no such chance.

THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP AS CARLSEN THINKS IT SHOULD BE

These are the obvious reasons, but I think there is also a deeper reason for these tournaments.

It is nothing new that the World Champion is not happy with the World Championship cycle. He stated this a long time ago and keeps repeating it. He also proposed an alternative to the classical matches that he plays. Unsurprisingly, he proposed exactly the same system that is now employed in the Champions Tour.

In other words, these tournaments are field-testing Carlsen's preferred system for the World Championship!

THE 2022 TOUR: 69 DAYS OF CHESS FROM FEBRUARY UNTIL NOVEMBER

The Airthings Masters is the first event on the $1.6 million 2022 Meltwater Champions Chess Tour.

As reported by Chess24.com, there has been a series of changes in the rulebook, devised by the Play Magnus Group which organises the event. As was said, the changes were made 'to ensure every game in every event is critical'. The changes include 'cash bonuses for every rapid game played and a football-style three points for a win, one for a draw, scoring-system at the round-robin stages. Two-day knockout rounds have also been slimmed down to a winner-takes-all single match to up the excitement factor.'

In another change, there will be more tournaments which will allow players to compete online from the same location.

The tournament structure has also been slightly amended: there will be nine events instead of 10, each with separate prize pots. Three of the events will be considered 'Majors' and will carry greater prestige and have more money at stake.

The ninth event will be played in November 2022, when the overall winner of the tour will be determined.

Altogether, there will be 69 days of pure chess entertainment spread over 39 weeks.

> IT IS NOTHING NEW THAT THE WORLD CHAMPION IS NOT HAPPY WITH THE WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP CYCLE. HE HAS PROPOSED AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE CLASSICAL MATCHES AND - GUESS WHAT - HIS PROPOSAL IS EXACTLY THE SAME AS THE SYSTEM THAT IS NOW EMPLOYED IN THE CHAMPIONS TOUR

He would prefer to play a four-game rapid match than one classical game in a World Championship match, something that would turn history and tradition on their heads, but Carlsen believes that a long series of rapid games are a more valid proof of one player’s superiority than 12 or 14 games of classical chess.

He substantiates this claim with the fact that it is difficult to win a classical game against a well-prepared player and a weaker player could hold the stronger one to draws thanks to this preparation. Therefore, a long series of rapid games is bound to show the superiority of the stronger player as preparation plays a lesser role in rapid chess. The length of the series also ensures that no accidental result is possible.

IS CARLSEN RIGHT?

There is certain logic in Carlsen’s explanations. It is an open question whether (or when?) he will decide to challenge the centuries-old traditions of the world championship match, but yours truly won’t be surprised if in the foreseeable future he decides to go his own way and have a cycle that he likes, with or without FIDE’s blessing.

I still remember 1993 and the schism in the chess world that followed after the breakaway match in London between Kasparov and Short, organised by the short-lived Professional Chess Association (PCA). It took 13 years to unify the chess world again. Kasparov was also Carlsen’s coach and, who knows, maybe the student picked up more than just chess knowledge from his predecessor.

ARE WE IN FOR ANOTHER SCHISM?

I hope not, but World Champions are an unpredictable lot.

Next year Carlsen is scheduled to play the winner of this year’s Candidates. As we wrote in the January issue, Carlsen said (not for the first time) that he might not defend his title, and mentioned that the only one who could motivate him would be Alireza Firouzja, the current 2nd highest ranked player in the world.

However, things in the chess world change quickly, and Carlsen is known to be able to adapt to things very quickly. So, let’s wait and see what happens – and a lot is bound to happen before we know where things are headed. Until then, enjoy the Meltwater show.

THE FIRST CHESS TOUR

The Champions Chess Tour 2021, known as the Meltwater Champions Chess Tour, was a 10-month long series of 10 online tournaments featuring the world's top players.

The tour started on November 22, 2020, and lasted until October 4, 2021.

The prize fund for the entire event was 1.5 million USD.

The games were played online, on chess24.com, and were broadcast on Twitch, YouTube, chess24.com and the tour's official website.

There were three different types of time control:

- In the rapid: each player had 15 minutes, plus a 10-second increment for each move.
- In the blitz: each player had 5 minutes, plus a 3-second increment for each move.
- In the Armageddon: White had 5 minutes, Black had 4 minutes, there was no increment, and Black wins the tie if there was a draw.

The tournaments were not rated by FIDE.

The winner of the 2020/2021 event was Magnus Carlsen while Teimour Radjabov was the runner-up. Levon Aronian was third and Wesley So finished fourth.

Borislav Ivkov (1933-2022)

One of the greatest characters chess ever had

By Milan Dinic

Borislav Ivkov was born in 1933 in Belgrade, then the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. He became the youth champion of Belgrade at the age of 14, and at the age of 17, he won the first World Junior Championship in Birmingham in 1951. He was awarded the title of Grandmaster in 1955 and for many years was considered one of the strongest Yugoslav and world players, next to Svetozar Gligoric. His peak was in the 1950s (when he was in the top 10 in the world) and in the 1960s.

A STELLAR CAREER

Ivkov had an outstanding career marked with successes in both national and international events. A three-time champion of Yugoslavia, he qualified for the 1965 Candidates matches (he lost to Bent Larsen) and played four more Interzonal tournaments during the 1960s and 1970s.

The winner of numerous strong tournaments (including Mar del Plata 1955, Buenos Aires 1955, Santiago 1959, Beverwijk 1961, Zagreb 1965, Amsterdam-IBM 1974), Ivkov also took the champion title at the European Senior Individual Championship in Davos in 2006.

Borislav Ivkov was a regular member of the Yugoslav chess team from 1965 until 1980, winning ten team medals in 12 Olympiads (six silver and four bronze medals) and five board medals. He played for Yugoslavia in the European team championships six times, winning three team silvers, one bronze and one gold board medal. Ivkov also took part in the historic match USSR vs the Rest of the World (1970), playing on the tenth board.

At these and many other events Ivkov was ahead of the likes of Gligoric, Najdorf, Larsen, Uhlmann, Portisch, Bronstein, Petrosian (when he was World Champion), Stein, Korchnoi and Jansa. Several world champions fell prey to Ivkov, including Bobby Fischer, Tigran Petrosian, Vasily Smyslov, Mikhail Tal and Anatoly Karpov. He also drew all of his games with Botvinnik.

A GREAT WRITER

Apart from being a world-class grandmaster, Borislav Ivkov was known as a prolific writer.

In his native Serbia, he published several books about chess and life, including *'My sixty-four years in chess'*, *'Black on white'*, *'Mesmerized by chess'*, and *'Parallels 1 and 2'*.

His books are dedicated to his career in chess but also – to the lives and characters of great players, the people he met, the places he visited and the experiences he had.

In one of the books, instead of a foreword, he wrote a few joking lines dedicated to my father: "Vladan Dinic, the bard of Yugoslav journalism and a well-known chess lover, said to me: 'From all of your books you may be able to put together one decent book!" Recently, he told my father that he was working on another book. We don't know if he finished it or not...

A BIG CHARACTER

Borislav Ivkov – or, Bora, as he was known – a true gentleman, one of those people who can charm their way in and out of any conversation, showing their vast knowledge about almost every topic but never coming across as arrogant or impatient.

To me, he was an example of what chess really needs – a friendly person, well-spoken, well-dressed, knowledgeable, interested in the world, happy talking to others and interesting to talk to.

One occasion stands out in my memory when I think of Bora Ivkov. Several years ago, he spoke at the promotion of my father's book about Bobby Fischer and his time in Belgrade during the 1992 rematch with Spassky (at the time, my father was closely involved in the event and covered it as a journalist, spending a lot of time with Fischer). One of the guests at the promotion was a famous opera singer from Serbia, Jadranka Jovanovic.

Bora started by saying how in one tournament in the 1950s in Latin America (I can't remember which one), he was rushing to finish the game so he could go and see – of all the things – a boxing match! What was even more surprising was that after the match Bora went to see a classical music concert. Now, boxing and classical music are two things you don't place together, let alone someone seeing both in one evening. Bora shared this story as a prelude to another one: he was flying back to Europe from a tournament and, during the long-haul flight, most of the players took out their pocket sets and played or analyzed games. However, Ivkov, at some point, noticed an unusual hat which belonged to one of the female passengers a few seats in front... 'I was so intrigued that during the whole flight, I was trying to find a way to politely approach that woman...' As he, later on, found out – that woman was the very person present at the book promotion, the opera singer Jadranka Jovanovic!

And, for me, that is Bora Ivkov – not just a great chess player but an amazing fountain of interesting stories about life, people and places.

Back in 2017, I interviewed him for the British Chess Magazine. As I sat down to write this obituary, I read the interview and looked at my notes. We discussed famous players, events, topics, chess and computers, as well as life in general. The interview was so extensive that I had to break it down into two parts. Here I share a few of the things Bora said, which should be noted in the history of the great game.

IVKOV, IN HIS OWN WORDS: "MY WHOLE PLAYING LIFE I DID NOT UNDERSTAND CHESS"

In one of the first sentences in that interview, Bora Ivkov summed up his chess life: "To be honest, my whole playing life, I did not understand chess. For me, chess was a way to see the world, and there are so many beautiful things to experience and learn out there... There are possibly two things more beautiful than chess – music and women. But, like music and women, chess needs understanding. And there are some great people who understood the link between chess and life so well..."

As for himself, Ivkov never thought he was someone to look up to when it comes to building a chess career. "I am not a good example of a chess player. I'm an anti-example! Months passed with me not looking at the board in times when I was at my peak. I was interested in sports, movies... I would rush to finish a game just so I could go and listen to a performance of a French pianist I loved. I liked going to museums, theatres, boxing matches, football games. In my time, chess could have been played at an amateur level. Meaning that you could play without spending too much time studying it."

ON LASKER, AVERBAKH, KERES, TAL, FISCHER AND TODAY'S CHESS

In the interview, we spoke about almost all the greatest names of chess. Here are Ivkov's reflections on a few of them.

As someone who "spent most of his time living in the past" Ivkov seemed to be most fond of Emanuel Lasker, or, rather, his path in life: "In the old days it was possible to make pauses in chess, learn something different and become something more than a human chess machine whose whole world begins and ends in 64 black and white squares. Emanuel Lasker managed to do that exceptionally well… Lasker was a figure, a character. Almost everyone else is only a chess player."

Ivkov considered today's players to be "too one-sided – only interested in chess". He also wasn't fond of the atmosphere in top chess events, saying that players today "are more like basketball stars who are ushered into the arena and then escorted out, with fans feeling a bit uncomfortable, gazing at the players passing by, trying to catch their look so they could ask for an autograph".

As Yuri Averbakh recently celebrated his 100th birthday, it seems appropriate to mention what Ivkov said in the interview about him: "Not only an excellent player who participated in the amazing Zurich 1953 Candidates tournament, but also a great author in the field of chess theory and chess life in general. A tall man, over 6'3", he was very good-looking, and I remember Gligoric describing him as Apollo. His body was like a Greek statue!"

When it came to manners, Ivkov considered Paul Keres to be the "greatest gentlemen in chess": "He carried himself in a very gracious and gentlemanly way. A very kind person. I played four games with him and lost all of them! But it was a pleasure to lose to him as he was so gracious."

Ivkov was very close to Mikhail Tal, who frequently played and appeared in Yugoslavia at the time. "Tal left the strongest impression on me… People only look at results, but they don't realize that Tal played with a third of his strength! He had health problems during the greater part of his life. Imagine if he had been healthy as Spassky – who is his peer and who was also an athlete?! He was probably the greatest player who also knew how to enjoy life! Even computers today don't have the same breadth of ideas and creativity as Tal."

On Fischer (whom he defeated twice), Ivkov was blunt: "He was a strange person. A recluse interested purely in chess and nothing else… If we agree that the line between a genius and a mad person is very thin, Fischer was on the fence there. I cannot say that he was crazy, but I also cannot claim that he was a completely sound person."

Reiterating that he is more of a fan of the past than the present, Ivkov pointed to one thing which distinguishes the play of the current generation compared to the "good old days": 'They all play like Fischer, meaning - they play until the end! Every position! In my day, when there is a dull position you would simply draw as there was no point in tormenting yourselves. Even Botvinnik would draw! But, today, they play and… win."

When it comes to computers, Ivkov thought that "they gave something and took something from chess" but the fact that computers are now stronger than men is irrelevant: "A plane is quicker than a man, but we still remember Usain Bolt!" In a more recent conversation – in a café in Belgrade, sitting with Grandmaster Ljubomir Ljubojevic and my father, the three debated on whether chess was better "in the old times" or nowadays. Ivkov summed it up: "The chess of today has nothing to do with earlier times. True, it's still played on the same 64-square black and white board, with the same pieces, but now in the times of computers, it is only CALLED chess, but it's something different."

Bora Ivkov's final resting place will be in Belgrade. He is survived by his wife and two children.

Roquetas de Mar Open:

A BRITISH STUDENT BETTER THAN GMs!

By IM Shaun Taulbut; Photo: ECF/ Brendan O'Gorman

Harry Grieve, an undergraduate at St Catharine's College, Cambridge, scored a great success in the Roquetas de Mar Open, finishing equal first with 7/9 and recording an international master norm.

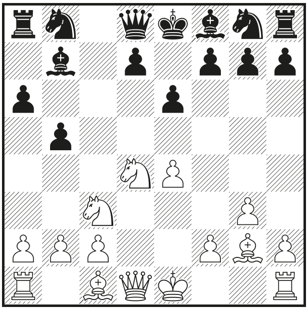
We look at two of his games, the first a tactical struggle against GM Karthik where Harry had a winning position and eventually won after mistakes on both sides in a time scramble.

Harry **Grieve** – Venkataraman (V4) **Karthik**

33rd Roquetas de Mar Open
Roquetas de Mar ESP (6.11)

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 The Closed Sicilian; Black decides to expand on the queenside, leaving his kingside development for later.

2...a6 3.g3 b5 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.♘ge2 e6 6.d4 cxd4 7.♘xd4

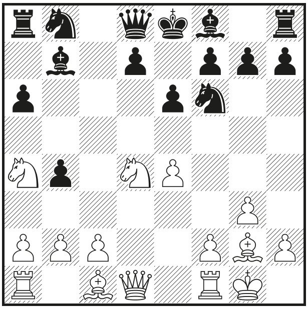


White has transposed back into a normal Sicilian, aiming to use his lead in development.

7...b4 Black could play 7...♘f6 8.a3 ♕c7 9.0-0 d6 10.♕e2, with a slight edge for White, but chooses to continue with his queenside play.

8.♘a4 8.♘ce2 ♘f6 9.♗g5 ♗e7.

8...♘f6 9.0-0



White sacrifices a pawn, relying on his lead in development.

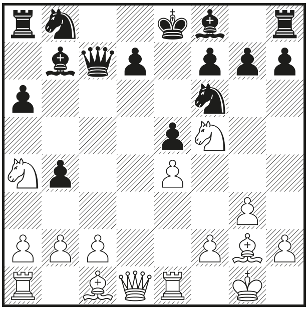
9...♕c7 On 9...♗xe4 10.♗xe4 ♘xe4 11.♖e1 d5 12.a3 bxa3 13.c4 White has good play for the sacrificed material.

10.♖e1 e5 If 10...♘c6 11.e5 with a strong attack, eg: 11...♘xe5 *(11...♘xd4 12.♕xd4 ♗xg2 (12...♘d5 13.♗d2) 13.exf6 is strong for White)* 12.♗xb7 wins;

10...d6 11.a3 is also promising for White.

11.♘f5

Harry Grieve



White now has the advantage, with his strong knight on f5.

11...h6 12.c4 ♗c6 13.c5 g6 13...♗xa4 14.♕xa4 g6 15.♘d6+ ♗xd6 16.cxd6 ♕xd6 17.♖d1 ♕e7 18.♗e3 ♘c6 19.♖ac1 is strong for White as ♗c5 will be awkward for Black.

14.♘d6+ ♗xd6 15.cxd6 ♕a5 16.b3 ♗xa4 17.bxa4 ♔f8 18.♗b2 18.♗e3 ♘c6 19.♖c1 ♔g7 20.♖c5 ♕d8 21.f3 is good for White.

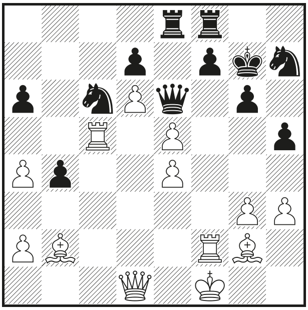
18...♘c6 19.f4 h5 20.h3 ♕c5+ 21.♔f1 21.♔h2 ♘g4+ is winning: 22.hxg4 hxg4+ 23.♗h3 ♕f2+ 24.♔h1 ♖xh3#.

21...♕c4+ 22.♖e2 ♕e6 22...h4 23.♖c1 ♕e6 24.g4 exf4 25.e5 ♘h7 26.♗d5 ♕e8 27.e6 is crushing; 22...♖e8 23.♖c1 ♕e6 24.♕d3 a5 25.f5 ♕xa2 26.♖a1 traps the queen.

23.♖c1 ♖e8 24.fxe5 24.♕d3 is very strong, with the threat of f5.

24...♘h7 24...♘xe5 25.♖c5 ♘c6 26.♖xc6 dxc6 27.♕d4 ♖h7 28.♕xf6 is winning for White.

25.♖f2 ♔g7 26.♖c5 ♖hf8



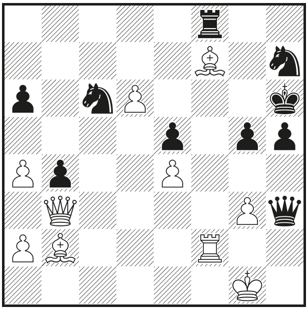
27.♕c1 27.♕d2; 27.♔g1 are good alternatives here.

27...♖c8 28.♔g1 ♘a7 29.♗f1 29.♖c7 is very unpleasant for Black: 29...♖xc7 30.dxc7 ♘c8 31.♗f1 ♕c6 32.e6+ f6 33.♕xc6 dxc6 34.♖d2 is strong.

29...♖c6 30.♖xc6 ♘xc6 31.♗c4 ♕xh3 32.♕f4

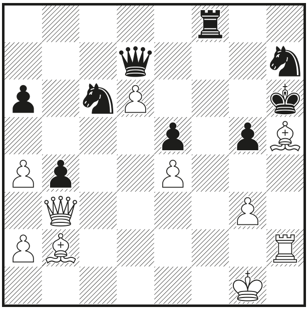
Best is 32.e6+ f6 33.e7 ♕xg3+ *(If 33...♖e8 34.♕f4 and f6 collapses)* when 34.♖g2 ♕xd6 35.exf8♕+ is winning for White.

32...g5 33.♕f3 ♔g6 34.♗xf7+ ♔h6 35.e6 dxe6 36.♕b3 e5



37.♖h2 The winning line is 37.♗e6 g4 38.♕e3+ ♔g7 39.d7 h4 40.♖xf8 ♔xf8 41.♕f2+ ♔e7 42.♕f7+ ♔d6 43.d8♕+ ♘xd8 44.♕d7+ ♔c5 45.♕d5+ ♔b6 46.♕xd8+ ♔b7 47.♗d5+ ♔a7 48.♕c7#.

37...♕d7 38.♗xh5

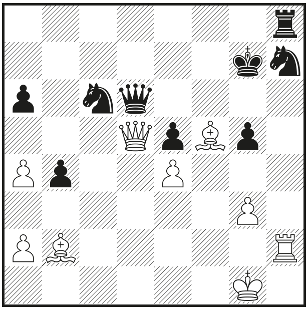


38.♕e6+ ♕xe6 39.♗xe6 ♖d8 40.d7 ♘f8 41.♖c2 is still good for White.

38...♕xd6 38...♕a7+ would have won for Black, eg: 39.♔g2 ♕f2+ 40.♔h3 ♕f1+ 41.♖g2 ♕h1+ 42.♖h2 g4+ 43.♔xg4 ♕xe4+ 44.♔h3 ♘g5#

39.♗g4+ ♔g7 40.♗f5 ♖h8
40...♘f6 is equal.

41.♕d5



Now White has a big advantage on the board as the knight on c6 and pawn on e5 are vulnerable to attack by the white pieces.

41...♕c7 42.♖c2 ♕b6+ 43.♕c5 ♕d8 44.♕xc6 ♕d1+ 45.♔g2 ♘f6 46.♕c7+ ♔f8 47.♕c5+ ♔f7 48.♕a7+ ♔f8 49.♕c5+ ♔f7 50.♕a7+ ♔f8 51.♖c8+ ♘e8 52.♕c5+ ♔g7 52...♔f7 53.♕c4+ ♔f8 54.♕xb4+ ♔f7 55.♕b7+ ♔f6 56.♖c6+ ♘d6 57.♗xe5+ ♔xe5 58.♕g7#.

53.♕xe5+

1-0

Now we will look at Grieve's last-round win in a Dutch Defence to finish equal first.

Anthony **Petkidis** – Harry **Grieve**

33rd Roquetas de Mar Open
Roquetas de Mar ESP (9.3), 09.01.2022

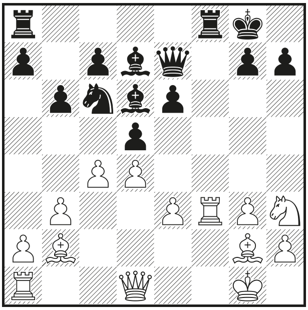
1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.g3 e6 4.♗g2 d5 The Stonewall defence: Black blocks the centre with his pawns.

5.♘d2 ♗d6 6.♘h3 ♘c6 7.e3 b6 Black prevents White playing ...c5 and allows the queen's bishop to develop on the queenside in some variations.
8.0-0 0-0 9.b3 ♘e4 Black chooses to exchange;

9...a5 is worth consideration.

10.♗b2 ♕e7 11.♘xe4 fxe4 12.f3 Opening up the diagonal for the king's bishop should give White an advantage.

12...exf3 13.♖xf3 ♗d7



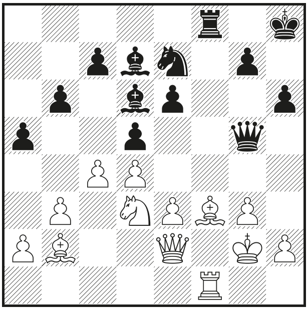
14.♘f2 Perhaps too passive: 14.♘f4 dxc4 *(14...♗xf4 15.exf4 is much better for White)* 15.bxc4 e5 16.♘d5 is better for White.

14...♔h8 15.♖c1 White cannot win a pawn: 15.♖xf8+ ♖xf8 16.cxd5 exd5 17.♗xd5 ♕xe3.

15...♕g5 16.♕e2 16.♘h3 ♕e7 17.♘f4 is better for White.

16...♖xf3 17.♗xf3 ♖f8 18.♔g2 Again, 18.♘h3 ♕f5 19.♗g4 ♕f7 is better for White.

18...a5 19.♖f1 h6 20.♘d3 ♘e7



A good move, creating counterplay on the kingside.

21.e4 If 21.c5 ♗xg3 22.hxg3 ♘f5 with a strong attack for the sacrificed piece because White cannot defend both e3 and g3.

21...dxe4 22.♗xe4 ♖xf1 23.♕xf1 ♘f5 24.♗xf5 24.♕e1 is slightly better for White.

24...exf5 Now Black is equal because of play on the light squares.

25.♕f2 ♕g4 26.d5 f4 Opening up the game for the light-squared bishop gives Black good winning chances and was difficult for White to foresee.

27.♗e5 On 27.♘xf4 ♗xf4 28.♕xf4 ♕e2+ 29.♕f2 ♗h3+ 30.♔g1 ♕d1+ wins for Black.

27...♗f5 28.♗xd6 ♗e4+ 29.♔g1 ♗xd3 30.♕d2 If 30.♕xf4 ♕d1+ 31.♔f2 cxd6 is winning for Black.

30...♕f3 31.♕xf4 ♕d1+ 32.♔f2 cxd6 33.♔e3 ♕e2+ 34.♔d4 ♗g6 35.♔c3 ♕c2+ 36.♔d4 ♕d3#

0-1

33RD ROQUETAS DE MAR OPEN ROQUETAS DE MAR ESP
LEADING FINAL ROUND 9 STANDINGS:

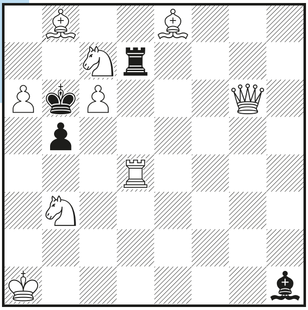
Rk	SNo	Name	Ti	FED	Rtg	Pts	TB1	TB2
1	3	Fier, Alexandr	GM	BRA	2573	7.0	50.5	2464.4
2	12	Vrolijk, Liam	IM	NED	2477	7.0	47.0	2367.0
3	43	Grieve, Harry	FM	ENG	2330	7.0	46.5	2382.6
4	21	Kaasen, Tor Fredrik	IM	NOR	2446	7.0	45.0	2355.3
5	2	Yuffa, Daniil	GM	ESP	2574	6.5	48.5	2442.6
6	5	Dardha, Daniel	GM	BEL	2532	6.5	48.5	2426.4
7	31	Petkidis, Anthony		GER	2411	6.5	48.5	2343.5
8	15	Popovic, Dusan	GM	SRB	2468	6.5	44.0	2340.4
9	1	Grigoryan, Karen H.	GM	ARM	2646	6.5	43.5	2339.4
10	8	Vasquez Schroeder, Rodrigo	GM	CHI	2494	6.5	43.0	2306.0
11	23	Mohammad Nubairshah Shaikh	IM	IND	2432	6.5	41.0	2279.3

PROBLEM WORLD

by Christopher Jones
cjajones1@yahoo.co.uk
Grandmaster of Chess Composition

Solutions are given on page 190

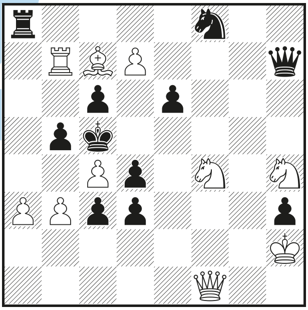
1



Kabe Moen (USA)
Mate in 2

ORIGINAL

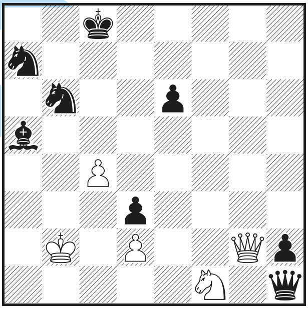
2



L. Lyubashevsky and L. Makaronez (Israel)
Mate in 3

ORIGINAL *after A. Johandl*

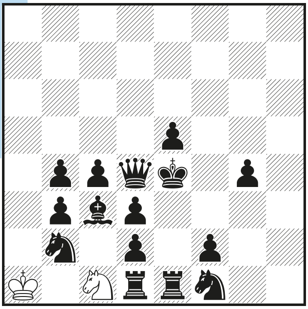
3



Christer Jonsson (Sweden)
Helpmate in 3 - 2 solutions

ORIGINAL

4



Ljubomir Ugren (Slovenia)
Helpmate in 6 - 3 solutions

ORIGINAL

GIBRALTAR: BATTLE OF SEXES IN GIBRALTAR

ROSEN
Eric
USA
MUZYCHUK
Mariya
UKR

A TIGHT VICTORY FOR MEN

By GM Alex Colovic / alexcolovic.com; Photo: John Saunders

In unexpected and difficult situations experienced organisers adjust. That is exactly what the team behind the tournament in Gibraltar did when faced with the constrictions imposed by the pandemic.

Instead of the massive Open that brought players from all over the world, they invited a selected mix of young and experienced players to stage an ‘enhanced’ battle of the sexes.

In previous versions (read pre-pandemic times) the Battle of the Sexes was a fun event played on a big chess board with a team of women playing against a team of men. Both teams discussed the moves before executing them on the big board by running across it and pressing a clock (the time control was blitz). Having witnessed it in 2020 I can attest that it was a great idea and fantastic entertainment!

A NEW FORMAT

This year, instead of a one-night fun blitz we were treated to a 10-round match in classical chess between two very equally-matched teams - Team Sabino (named after captain GM Sabino Brunello) with an average rating of 2465 and Team Pia (after captain GM Pia Cramling) with an average rating of 2450. The matches were played from 24th January to 3rd February and were played in Scheveningen style - each player of one team played against all the players of the other.

It is important to note that the prize fund was very attractive - £100,000, with 75% going to the winning team and 25% going to the losers. The prizes were shared equally among all 10 players of the team.

A CLOSE RACE

The match started in exciting fashion with the women winning the first two rounds 6.5-3.5 before the men came back in round three with a 7-3 win. Then, except the drawn round five, the men won all the others until round nine, when the women won 6-4. However, in the decisive 10th round, when the women needed a 3-point victory to force a tie-break, the men kept it tight and won three games while drawing the rest, thus winning the event with a score 53-47.

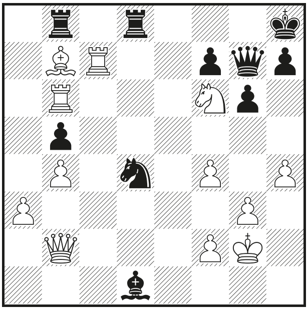
The match inevitably raised the eternal question why men generally play better chess than women. Not that this match offered an answer, but what can be said with certainty is that pitting and motivating women to play men more often in similar events will only bridge the gap faster.

Here is a selection of some interesting moments from the games.

In the second round a topsy-turvy game was played between the men's team captain and Marsel Efroimski.

Sabino **Brunello** – Marsel **Efroimski**

Gibraltar Battle of the Sexes (2.2)



White is totally dominating and is winning.

37.♕a2?? Giving Black a chance to save the game.

Marsel Efroimski

37.♖a6, unpinning, wins, the tactical justification being 37...♖xb7 38.♕xd4! ♖xd4 *(38...♖bb8 39.♖d6 is a more prosaic win.)* 39.♖a8+ with mate to follow on g8.

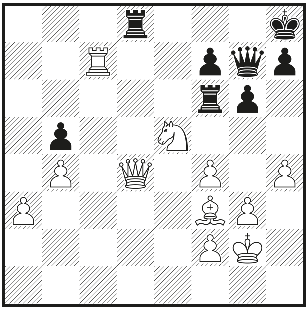
37...♗b3?? But Black misses it and hopes for a repetition.

37...♖xb7! was a small tactic, destroying the defender of the f3 square to allow for ...♗f3+. 38.♖bxb7 *(or 38.♖cxb7 ♗f3+ 39.♔h2 ♗xb7 40.♖xb7 ♕xf6 winning a piece, though after 41.♕xf7 ♕xf7 42.♖xf7 White has three pawns for the knight and good drawing chances.)* 38...♕xf6 *(here 38...♗f3+? is bad in view of 39.♔f1! not on h2 as to avoid checks from f3 with the knight. 39...♕xf6 40.♖xf7 and the rooks on the seventh rank are devastating.)* 39.♖xf7 ♕c6+ 40.♔g1 ♘f3+ 41.♔f1 ♘h2+ 42.♔g1 ♘f3+ with a perpetual check.

38.♕b2 ♗d1 39.♕c3! This time White is precise and is winning again.

39...♗f3+ 40.♗xf3 ♖xb6 41.♘d7 ♖d6 42.♘e5 White is winning as Black cannot coordinate his pieces to defend everything: the pawn on f7, the knight on d4 and the back rank.

42...♖f6 43.♕xd4??



A hallucination.

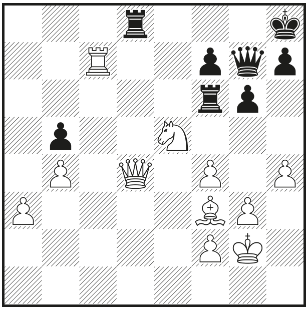
43.♗d5 was one convincing way to win, attacking f7. After 43...♖xd5 44.♖c8+ ♕g8 45.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 46.♕c8+ ♔g7 47.♘d7 White further wins the exchange in view of the threat of mate on f8. 47...♖e6; 43.♗e4 was another move that underlines the helplessness of Black's position as she can hardly find a move.

43...♖xd4 44.♖c8+ ♕g8 45.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 So White basically gave up a lot of material and ended up two exchanges down. Luckily his position was so good that even here he keeps some drawing chances.

46.♗c6 ♖xc6? A panicky decision. Now White manages to get rid of the queenside pawns.

46...♖fd6 was natural, keeping both rooks. After 47.♗xb5 ♔f8 Black has excellent winning chances though White will resist for a long time.

47.♘xc6 ♖d3 48.♘a7 ♖xa3 49.♘xb5 ♖b3 50.♘d4 ♖xb4 51.♘c2 ♖b2



Somewhat gratuitously Black offered a draw as she could have played on in this endgame for many more moves. Probably she was happy to escape a loss and didn't believe she could win.

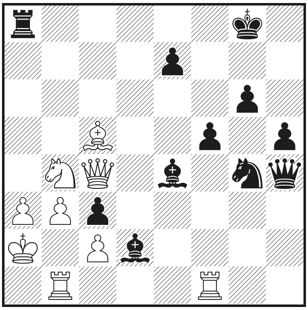
½-½

……

There were a lot of blunders in the event; here is an example which has several pretty bad ones concentrated in only a few moves.

Zhansaya **Abdumalik** – Eric **Rosen**

Gibraltar Battle of the Sexes (9.8)



Black was winning for quite some time now but, even though he still is, things got a bit out of hand. With her last move White gave check so Black had to decide where to move the king.

37...♔f8?? A horrendous blunder, simply dropping the bishop in view of the pin on the f-file.

37...♔g7 and hiding the king to h6 was still winning as Black's pawn mass on the kingside should decide, even though the position remains sharp.

38.♕xe4 Picking up the piece and the game. As if this wasn't enough a few moves later Black dropped the rook too:

38...♖a5 39.♕d4 ♕f6?? Black is of course losing, but there was no need to give the rook too.

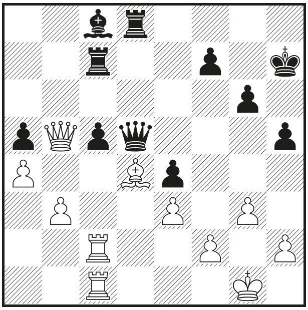
40.♕d8+ ♔f7 41.♕xa5 A simple operation, typical for blitz chess. Black must have been so shocked that he continued for nine more moves before resigning.

1-0

Even though in the following game Houska made a mistake, the ensuing combination was not that easy to spot.

Bilel **Bellahcene** – Jovanka **Houska**

Gibraltar Battle of the Sexes (6.8)



With his last move, 33.♗d4, White attacked the pawn on c5. The pawn cannot be defended, but Black should be able to use the weaknesses of the light squares around White's king to create counterplay.

33...♗h3? Alas, the wrong move-order: Black forgets that she too has weaknesses around her king!

33...♕f5! was the correct way, intending ...♕f3 and only then ...♗h3. After 34.♖xc5 ♖xc5 35.♖xc5, ♕f3, threatening ...♗h3 forces White's queen back to f1 to prevent that threat. After 36.♕f1, ...♗b7! is a fine move, threatening ...♖xd4 followed by e3 even though 36...♗e6 with the idea of ...♗xb3 should suffice for equality as well. With the queen passive on f1 White cannot hope to convert his extra pawn.

Eric Rosen

34.♖xc5 ♖xc5 35.♖xc5 ♕e6 36.♖xh5+! This is the refutation. White is the first to be able to take advantage of the weak king.

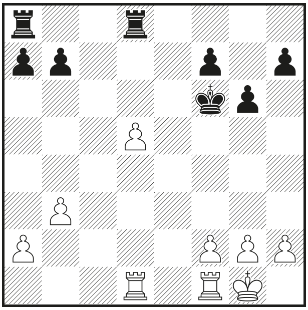
36...gxh5 37.♕xh5+ ♕h6 38.♕xf7+

1-0

To conclude, two excellent rook endgames worth studying. It's notable that the women showed much better technique than their opponents, winning what should have been relatively easy draws for the weaker side.

Mariya **Muzychuk** – Eric **Rosen**

Gibraltar Battle of the Sexes (5.8)



I watched this game live and I expected it should be a rather easy draw for Black as he can easily blockade the passed d-pawn. His king is already centralised so he is practically playing with an extra piece. But this impression turned out to be somewhat superficial as, even though objectively the position is a draw, White can pose certain problems.

23...♖d7 Black intends to double on the d-file.

23...♖ac8, with the idea of ...♖c2, immediately seeking counterplay, was also good and quite a typical plan for rook endgames where the defending side should seek activity first and foremost.

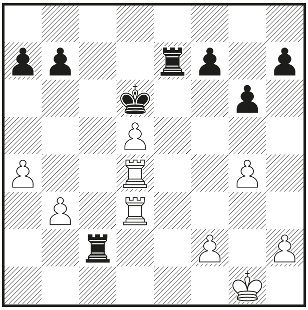
24.♖d4 ♖c8?! This is somewhat strange and inconsistent - if Black wanted to put a rook on the c-file why did he need to play ...♖d7 first? Objectively, Black is still fine though.

24...♖ad8 was the natural continuation that followed the idea from the last move. 25.♖fd1 ♔e5 Black uses his "extra" king to maximum effect. or 26.f4+ *(26.♖a4 a6 and White can no longer keep the extra pawn.)* 26...♔d6 when, with the safe blockade on d6, Black can redeploy his rooks on the open c and e-files.

25.♖fd1 ♖c2 26.a4 ♔e5 27.g3 ♔d6 Black goes for the blockade and banks on the activity of his rooks.

27...♖c5 was a natural alternative, going after the pawn. 28.d6 ♖c6 when Black will regain the pawn sooner rather than later.

28.♖1d3 ♖e7 29.g4!?



An interesting prophylactic move that prevents ...f5. With the f and h-pawns pinned back White has ideas like ♖f4-f6 or ♖h3, attacking h7.

29...♖e5 Black controls the fifth rank and allows for ...f5 or ...h5 in case White attacks those pawns. Again, Black is fine after this, but again it's a decision that makes it more complicated for Black.

29...♖ce2!? was not an obvious alternative, but Black wants to play ...♖e4 to exchange one pair of rooks as then the d-pawn will be easier to collect. For example: 30.♔g2 ♖2e4 31.♔f3 ♖xd4 32.♖xd4 ♖e5 going after the d5-pawn. 33.♖b4 b6 34.a5 bxa5 35.♖b7 f6 36.♖xh7 ♖xd5 37.♖xa7 ♖b5 with a draw as White cannot make progress without losing the b-pawn, as would be the case after 38.♔g2 g5, and even if White gets three vs two on the kingside it's an elementary draw as she cannot create a passed pawn.

30.♖f4 f5 31.gxf5 ♖xf5 32.♖xf5 gxf5 33.♔g2 Black should still be fine here, but he complicated things for himself. His pawns can be attacked and this makes his decisions subject to calculation, where it's easier to make a mistake.

33...♖e2 With this and his next move Black shows indecisiveness. If he wanted to wait it was better to move one pawn from the seventh rank, for example 33...a6.

> *What can be said with certainty is that by pitting and motivating the women to play men more often in similar events will only bridge the gap faster*

34.♖h3 ♖b2 Latching onto the b3-pawn, but again it can be observed that Black plays without clear ideas and changes his mind too often. This never leads to a good outcome.

34...♖e7 was more consistent with Black’s last move. The rook defends the pawn on h7 and the king still attacks the pawn on d5. After 35.♔f3 ♔xd5 36.♔f4 ♖e2! the position is sharp but Black has enough counterplay to draw: for example, 37.f3 ♖b2 38.♖xh7 ♖xb3, threatening ...♖b4 while keeping an eye on the f3-pawn, and thus preventing White from taking ♔xf5.

35.♖xh7 ♖xb3 36.♖f7 White goes pawn hunting and it’s all calculation now. Objectively the position is still a draw.

36.h4!? was an attempt to advance the passed pawn as fast as possible. 36...♔xd5 37.h5 ♖b4 38.h6 ♖g4+ 39.♔f3 ♖h4 and Black manages to control the passed pawn.

36...♖b4 Putting the rook behind the pawn was simpler: 36...♖a3 ensures that the pawn is taken on the next move.

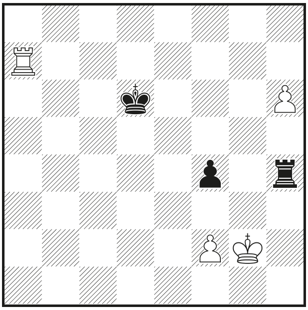
37.a5 ♖b5 38.h4 White starts to push the pawn but Black should have no trouble controlling it.

38...♖xd5 39.h5 f4 39...♖xa5 40.h6 ♖a4 should also draw easily as the king can approach the h-pawn after 41.♖xb7 ♔e6

40.h6 ♖xa5 41.♖xb7 ♖h5? Black’s play is mired in confusion. Why not simply move the king closer to the h-pawn with 41...♔e6, especially as Black doesn’t threaten to take the h-pawn after White’s next move?

42.♖xa7 Now Black is a pawn down again. It’s still a draw, mind you...

42...♖h4??



The final inexplicable move. But the draw was no longer trivial.

42...♖xh6?? 43.♖a6+ drops the rook, of course.

42...♔e6 Getting the king closer was both natural and best. After 43.♖a3 f3+! is the important move to secure the draw. White cannot take with her king because of ...♖h3+ and she cannot take with rook because then after ...♖xh6 the position is a theoretical draw. 44.♔g3 ♔f7 45.♖a6 ♔g8 46.♔xf3 ♔h7 47.♔g4 ♖h1 with a theoretical draw as White’s h-pawn is too advanced and the black king is correctly placed in front of it.

43.♖a3! Threatening ♖h3. Now White wins.

43...f3+ Too late. Black could have played the same idea with the king on e6, as shown in the previous note.

44.♔g3 ♖h1 45.♖a4 Threatening ♖h4.

45...♖g1+ 46.♔xf3 ♖h1 47.♔g3 ♖g1+ 48.♔h2 ♖g8 49.h7 ♖h8 50.♖h4 The rest is trivial.

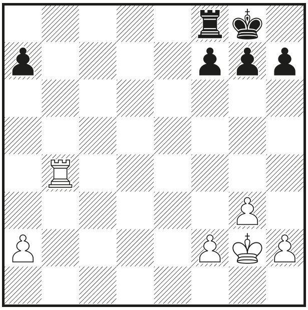
50...♔e6 51.♔g3 ♔f5 52.♖h5+ ♔g6 53.♔g4 ♔f6 54.♖h6+ ♔g7 55.♔g5 ♔f7 56.♖h4 ♔g7 57.♖h3 ♔f7 58.♔h6 ♖a8 59.♖f3+ ♔e6 60.♔g7 ♖a7+ 61.♔g8

1-0

It's very instructive to note how a seemingly easy rook endgame can be messed up with a series of sub-optimal decisions. As Tarrasch used to say, all rook endgames are drawn, except the ones that aren't.

Pia **Cramling** – Gillan **Bwalya**

Gibraltar Battle of the Sexes (9.7)



A typical (and quite common) situation in rook endgames: White's rook is more active, so the question here is whether Black should activate the rook at the expense of his a-pawn (when he should be confident in his knowledge of how to draw the ensuing typical theoretical position) or to defend the a-pawn at the expense of the passivity of his rook.

28...♖a8? Going passive in rook endgames is almost always a bad idea. While the position remains a draw, it's always easier to play actively than defend passively.

28...♖d8 was better and easier. After 29.♖b7 g5 30.♖xa7 ♖d2 31.a4 ♖a2, the position is a theoretical draw, though Black needs to know how to draw it!

29.♖b5!? White wants to put the rook on a5, controlling the fifth rank, as that prevents the favourable kingside structures for Black through having a pawn on g5 or h5.

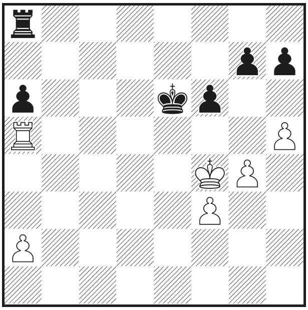
29...♔f8 29...a5 30.a4 still keeps the black rook passive.

30.♖a5 ♔e7 31.g4 Pinning down Black's kingside pawns, so even if he plays ...g6 then ...h5 is not possible.

31...♔d7 32.♔g3 a6 33.h4 ♖a7 Black can only wait.

Going to the queenside is worse, as after 33...♔c6 34.h5 ♔b6 35.♖e5 ♖a7 36.h6! g6 37.♔h4, with ideas like ♔g5-f6-h7 or ♖e8-h8, White is winning.

34.♔f4 ♔e6 35.f3 ♖a8 36.h5 f6?!



Worsening his already difficult position.

36...h6! made more sense, if for no other reason than to stop a possible h6 by White.

37.♔g3 g6 38.♔f4 ♖a7?! Black continues to stay passive.

38...♔f7! was a better defensive attempt, with the idea of ...♔g7-h6 to try for counterplay by attacking the pawn on h5. The tactical justification is that White cannot play 39.h6 as then Black has 39...g5+ with the idea of ...♔g6 and 40.♔f5 is met by 40...♖e8! and in view of the threat of mate on e5 White cannot take the pawn on a6.

39.♔e4 ♔d6?! Again 39...♔f7 was better.

40.♔f4 White takes her time, though it was already possible to play 39.f4 or 39.h6.

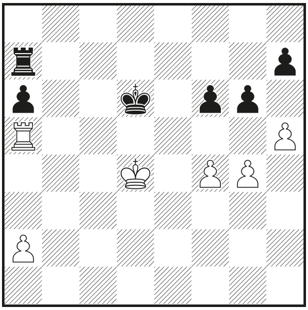
40...♔e6 41.♔e3 ♔d6?! Perhaps Black

Pia Cramling

thought he had a fortress? Going to f7 and then g7 and h6 was better, though I assume he didn't consider this plan.

42.f4 ♖a8 43.♔d4 Going 43.h6! was more precise.

43...♖a7?



Staying passive forever is a certain path to defeat.

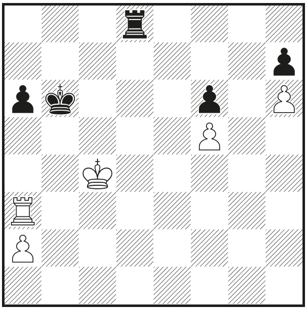
43...♔e7! was the last chance for Black. The idea is to activate the rook by ...♖d8-d6. 44.♔e3, avoiding the check from d8 but also the possible tactical trick ...f5 and then if gxf5 Black recaptures ...gxh5 and obtains a passed h-pawn. 44...♖b8! is the typical method, giving up a pawn for activation of the rook. Now if White doesn't take the pawn Black will play ...♖b6 and after 45.♖xa6 gxh5 46.gxh5 ♖b5 Black has enough activity for a draw, for example 47.♖a7+ ♔e6 48.♖xh7 ♖a5, winning the a-pawn, and with the king coming to f5 Black holds the draw without problems.

44.h6! A good plan. White wants to continue with f5 and disrupt Black's kingside structure.

44...♖a8 45.f5 gxf5 In case of 45...g5 White wins after 46.♖a3! with the idea ♖e3-e6.

46.gxf5 Now in addition to the idea ♖a3-e3 there is also ♖a3-g3 with the idea of invading on g7.

46...♔c6 47.♖a3 ♖d8+ 48.♔c4 ♔b6 Black finally threatens to activate his rook, but...



49.♖b3+! A precise move, forcing the king to a worse position.

49...♔c6 50.♖e3 Threatening ♖e6.

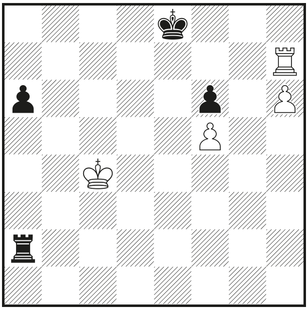
50...♖d5 51.♖e6+ ♖d6 52.♖e8 The alternative 52.♖e7 was more precise, but White can return to this move on the subsequent moves.

52.♖e7 ♖d2 53.a4 wins a pawn and the game for White; for example ,53...♖c2+ 54.♔b4 ♖f2 55.♖e6+ ♔d7 56.♖xf6 ♔e7 57.♖xa6 ♖xf5 58.♖a7+ ♔d6 59.♖xh7 with two pawns up and a winning position.

52...♖d2 The rook breaks free, but it's already too late.

53.♖c8+? Surprisingly, this check lets the win slip! White could still return to the winning idea after 53.♖e6 ♖d6 54.♖e7.

53...♔d7 54.♖h8 ♖xa2 55.♖xh7+ ♔e8??



An awful move - why voluntarily allow the cutting off along the seventh rank? For a second time in this game (the first one on move 28) Black makes a bad move for what I presume was lack of basic endgame knowledge. Perhaps the choice between 55...♔d6 and 55...♔c6 wasn't an easy one, but it was clear that one of those had to be played!

55...♔c6 was the logical move, not allowing the king to be cut off. After 56.♖f7 *(here 56.♖h8 doesn't win because after 56...♖h2 57.h7 ♖h4+ 58.♔d3 ♔b7 the king on b7 successfully prevents the liberation of the rook on h8.)* 56...♖a4+ 57.♔b3 ♖h4 58.♖xf6+ ♔d5 White's king is too far away to support his pawns, which will soon be lost.

55...♔d6? was the other logical move, but this loses because after 56.♖h8 ♖h2 57.h7 ♖h4+ 58.♔d3 Black cannot prevent the rook from h8 moving along the eighth rank with check or after 58...♔c7 59.♖a8 White wins a rook due to the typical trick 59...♖xh7 60.♖a7+.

56.♖a7 Now it's quickly game over.

56...♖h2 57.h7 ♔f8 58.♔d5 The white king simply marches to f6.

58...a5 59.♔e6 a4 60.♔xf6

1-0

While the men won the overall match, I wouldn't be against seeing a rematch next year! And if it happens, I'd bet on the women.

GIBRALTAR
INTERNATIONAL CHESS FESTIVAL

ODE TO ENERGY AND TO A FRIEND

By Grandmaster Raymond Keene OBE

It is a well-known fact that the text to Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Freude schöner Götterfunken, Tochter aus Elysium...), is based on Friedrich Schiller's Ode to Joy (Freude in German). It is less well known that Schiller originally wrote the poem as an ode to Freedom, Freiheit in German, but that the word freedom was suppressed by the censors in the French revolutionary days when it was written. Freude, two syllables, begins with F, was deemed more suitable. However, if you read the full text of the ode, it's obvious that Freedom works far better than the less energetic joy.

An die Freude / Ode to Joy
('Beethoven' extract)
translated by RDK

Freude, schöner Götterfunken,
Tochter aus Elysium,
Wir betreten feuertrunken,
Himmlische, den Heiligtum.
Deine Zauber binden wieder,
Was die Mode streng geteilt,
Alle Menschen werden Brüder,
Wo dein sanfter Flügel weilt.

Joy, beautiful divine spark, daughter of Elysium. Oh heavenly one, we enter, drunk with fire, your holy realm. Your magic makes whole what custom had sternly rent asunder. All men become brothers, where your gentle wing protects us.

Seid umschlungen Millionen!
Diesen Kuß der ganzen Welt!
Brüder - überm Sternenzelt
Muß ein lieber Vater wohnen.

Embrace, ye millions! Offer this kiss to the entire world. Brothers, above the canopy of the stars a dear Father must reside.

Ecstasy? Yes! Freedom? Certainly! Joy? Absolutely not!

My late friend Eric Schiller would have appreciated the switch. He was one of the most energetic and multi-talented chess activists I have ever encountered. Just imagine this list of chess-related achievements: chess master (FM), having once defeated Reshevsky in a simul; chief press officer in one world chess championship (London 1986) and arbiter in another (London 1993).

A mutual friend, Adam Black, has kindly shared an extract from Eric's obituary.

"Recently I have discovered the sad news of the death of my good friend and linguist, Dr Eric Schiller. I take some solace in paying my belated respects to this bright and generous spirit. I was fortunate enough to work with Eric, jointly running the press rooms during the 1986 World Chess Championship in London, the 1990 WCC in New York, and the 1993 WCC also in London."

"It was he that introduced fax machines and Apple Macs at a time when the contemporary standard was Teeline and Telex. Eric made as much collective and communal as was possible. He suffered fools gladly (I should know!) always preferring to support and assist rather than castigate and demean. He is deeply missed by family and friends alike."

Eric was profusely prolific as a writer, while active as an organiser staging Grandmaster strength events, notably in Hawaii and memorably, in which I participated, in Chicago in 1985 where I had the good fortune to win two of my favourite games.

In this first game I am White against Eugene Martinovsky using one of my most reliable lines against the Gruenfeld.

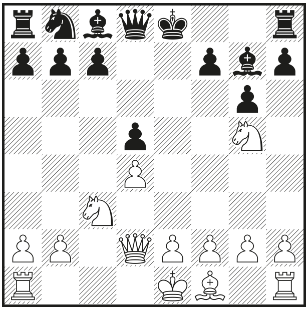
Raymond **Keene** - Eugene **Martinovsky**

Chicago Chicago, IL USA, 1985

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♗g5 A reliable system which I have used about six or seven times. I was also impressed with Karpov's win with it over Korchnoi at Phillips and Drew, London 1984.

5...♘e4 6.cxd5 ♘xg5 7.♘xg5 e6 Also possible is the gambit 7...c6!? 8.dxc6 ♘xc6 9.e3 e5 10.d5 ♕xg5 11.dxc6 O-O. Huebner had a rough time on the white side of this against Kavalek at Montreal 1979, so I had no reason to doubt that his subsequent try 12.h4! ♕e7 13.♘d5 ♕d6 14.c7 e4 15.♗c4 ♕c5 16.♕c2 b5 17.♗b3 ♕xc2 18.♗xc2 ♖e8 19.O-O-O ♗b7 20.♔b1, eventually won by White in 143 moves (Huebner - Ftacnik, Biel 1984), truly does represent a well thought out edge for White.

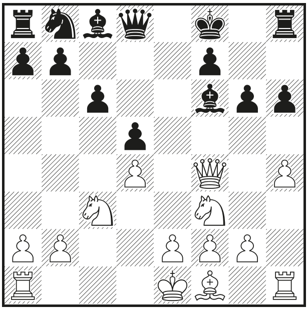
8.♕d2 exd5



Most theoretical texts regard this as equal, but in my opinion Black still has to contend with certain difficulties, e.g. a displaced king. Safer is 8...h6 9.♘h3 exd5 10.♘f4, as in Karpov - Adorjan, Budapest 1973. After 10.♕e3+ ♔f8 11.♘f4 c5! Black is OK.

9.♕e3+ ♔f8 I love it when my opponent cannot castle.

10.♕f4 ♗f6 11.h4 h6 12.♘f3 c6

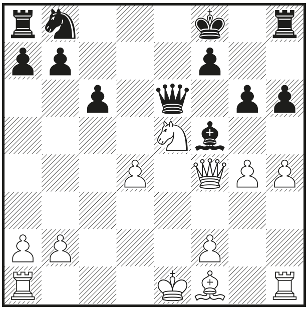


Authorities differ on this position. BCO says 13.e4 dxe4 14.♘xe4 is slightly better for White, as in the game. Other books give 13.e4 ♗e6 14.e5 ♗e7 15.♗d3 ♔g7 'equal'. I don't believe that at all. White can play g4-g5 or h4-h5; also 16.♕e3 intending ♘e2-f4. Black has many difficulties to overcome.

13.e4! dxe4 14.♘xe4 ♗f5 This looks plausible but loses by force. 14...♕a5+ 15.♘fd2 ♗g7 16.♗c4 is virtually winning, so the best defence is 14...♔g7, although 15.♗c4! keeps White on top.

15.♘xf6 ♕xf6 16.g4 ♕e6+ 16...♕e7+ 17 ♘e5 ♕b4+ 18.♔d1 ♕xb2 19.♖c1 ♗e6 20.♗c4! ♗xc4 21.♖xc4 with an crushing attack; or 17...♗d7 18.♗c4.

17.♘e5!



17...f6 17...♕d5 18.gxf5 ♕xh1 19.fxg6.

18.gxf5 fxe5 19.dxe5 ♕xf5 19...gxf5 20.♗c4 wins.

20.♕b4+ ♔g7 21.0-0-0 This is crushing. No need to enter complications with 21.♕xb7+ ♕d7 22.♕xa8 ♕c7. Black now has to stop 22.♕xb7+.

21...b5 22.♗d3 ♕xe5 23.♖he1 ♘a6 24.♕g4 ♕f6 25.♗xg6 ♖hd8 If 25...♘c5 26.♗c2+ ♔f7 27.♕h5+ or 26...♔f8 27.♕b4.

26.♖e6 ♖xd1+ 27.♔xd1 ♕xb2 Or 27...♕f8 28 ♗c2+ ♔h8 29 ♕d4+ ♕g7 30.♖xh6+; 27...♕xf2 28.♗f5+ ♔f8 29 ♖f6+ also wins easily.

28.♗c2+ ♔f8 29.♕f5+

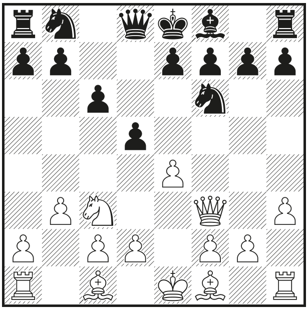
1-0

Lawrence Day - Raymond Keene

Windy City International Chicago, IL USA, 1985

1.e4 c6 2.♘c3 I had expected 2.d4 d5 3.e5!? ♗f5 4.♘c3, e.g. 4...e6 5 g4 ♗g6 6.♘ge2 ♗b4 7.h4 ♗e4 8.♖h3 h5 9.♘g3 c5 10.♗g5 ♕b6 as in Day - Vranesic, Canadian Championship 1981; here Day himself in BCO gives 11 a3! ’better for White’. Therefore I wanted to try 4...♕b6!? 5 g4 ♗d7 6.♘a4 ♕c7 7.♘c5 e6 8.♘xd7. Velimirovic - Kasparov, Moscow Interzonal 1982, proceeded with 8...♘xd7. My new idea was 8...♕xd7 intending a quick ...c6-c5 in conjunction with ...♘c6. The black ♘g8 can go to e7 to hold up White's thematic plan of f2-f4-f5 which caused Kasparov trouble in his game.

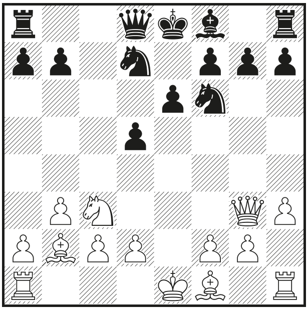
2...d5 3.♘f3 ♗g4 4.h3 ♗xf3 5.♕xf3 ♘f6 6.b3!?



This must be a novelty, though it's quite in Day's inventive style. I anticipated that White would follow up with O-O-O and then g4, h4, g5, h5, trying to mince my kingside in cooperation with the ♗b2.

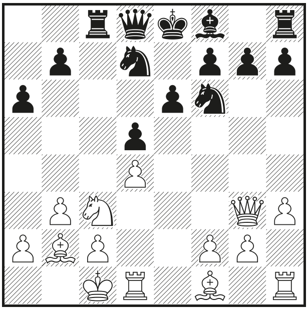
6...e6 7.♗b2 ♘bd7 8.exd5? From now on White starts to play feebly. He should maintain the tension with 8 O-O-O, although 8...♗b4 is satisfactory for Black.

8...cxd5 9.♕g3



With threats of ♘b5, also trying to impede the development of Black's dark-squared bishop. A broadly similar concept was seen in Smyslov - Botvinnik (first match game, World Championship 1958), which duplicated this game for the first five moves and then varied with 6.d3 e6 7.♗e2 ♘bd7 8.♕g3, but Botvinnik proved that 8...g6! is possible, even with ...e7-e6 already played. Black developed the ♗f8 on g7 and went on to win. So in this game I always had ...g7-g6 in mind as a reserve development.

9...a6 10.0-0-0 ♖c8 11.d4?



A losing positional blunder which weakens c3 and blocks his dark-squared bishop. Perhaps White was bothered by distant threats of ...d5-d4 from Black. Anyway, 11.♖e1 is superior.

11...♕a5 Black swiftly works up an annihilating initiative.

12.♔b1 ♗a3 13.♗a1 ♗b4 14.♖d3 Of course 14.♕xg7 loses a piece to 14...♖g8.

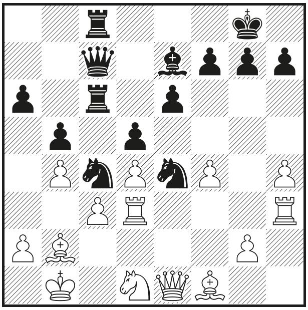
14...0-0 15.♕e3 The threat was 15...♗xc3 and 16...♘e4.

15...♖c6 16.♘d1 ♘e4 Also tempting but complicated is 16...♖xc2 17.♔c2 ♕xa2+ 18.♗b2 ♖c8+ 19.♖c3! ♗xc3 20.♘xc3 ♘e4 21.♗c4! ♘xc3 22.♖a1 ♘d1!

17.c3 ♗e7 18.h4 b5 The rest is automatic. White's queenside pawns are structurally dead, and Black enjoys the luxury of having the white king as an additional target.

19.b4 ♕c7 20.f4 I didn't understand this, but it is too late to make any difference.

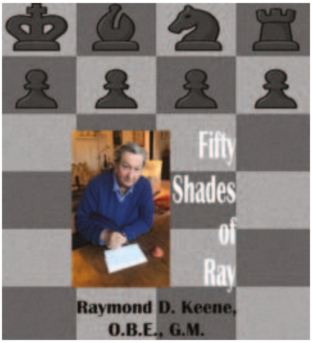
20...♖c8 21.♗b2 ♘b6 22.♖h3 ♘c4 23.♕e1



A series of brutal sacrifices now forces mate.

23...♗xb4 24.cxb4 ♘a3+ 25.♗xa3 ♖c1+

0-1



Hardinge Simpole

is delighted to announce
the publication of

Fifty Shades of Ray

Chess in the year of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Raymond D. Keene

Remembering
EDMUND THOROLD

By Alan Smith

6215 Edmund Thorold 1832- 1899 was not one of the leading lights of 19th century British chess, but he still made a substantial contribution.

He was past his peak when he appeared in three international tournaments from 1885 to 1890. He finished in the lower half each time but he was a threat to the very best. Witness a win v Schallopp at Hereford 1885, which cost the latter first place. Wins versus Gunsberg, Weiss and Taubenhaus at Bradford 1888. A win versus Blackburne at Manchester 1890.

Before that, Thorold was one of the leading lights of the provincial chess scene. He won first prizes at Newcastle 1870, London 1878, Manchester 1882 (tied with Bernard Fisher) and Birmingham 1883, ahead of Amos Burn.

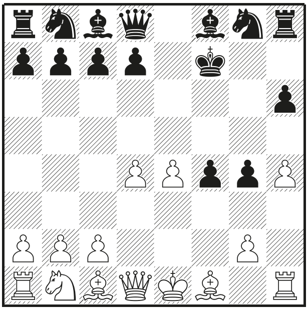
He is principally remembered today because he championed a suggestion of Wormald's in the Allgaier Gambit and fashioned it into a dangerous attacking weapon. Modern databases have forgotten these games. *Quotes and Queries* has not.

Here are his earliest games with what came to be known as the Thorold Allgaier Gambit.

Edmund **Thorold** - James Innes **Minchin**

2nd match Clifton 1875

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘g5 h6 6.♘xf7 ♔xf7 7.d4



Much stronger than 7.Bc4+ which was a favourite of Reverend Macdonnell, but was soon replaced by the text.

7...d5 8.♗xf4 ♘f6 9.♘d2 Most subsequent play and analysis concentrated on 9.♘c3.

9...♘h5 9...dxe4 is more challenging.

10.♗d3 ♘xf4 11.0−0 ♕xh4 12.♖xf4+ ♔e8 13.exd5 ♗d6 14.♖xe4+ ♔d8 15.♘f3 A key defensive resource.

15...♕g3 15...♕f6 16.♘e5 ♘d7 17.♘xg4 is critical.

16.♘e5 ♖f8 17.♕e2 ♗f5 17...♗xe5 18.♖xe5 ♘d7 19.♖e3 ♕d6 and Black is still a good way from completing his development.

18.♘f7+! ♖xf7 This loses on the spot, 18...♔d7! 19.♖e7+ ♗xe7 20.♗xf5+ ♔e8 21.♕e6! and the outcome is still in doubt.

19.♖e8+ ♔d7 20.♗xf5+ 20...♖xf5 21.♕e6 #

1–0

Illustrated London News, 9th October 1875

Edmund **Thorold** - William **Wayte**

Bath 1876

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘g5 h6 6.♘xf7 ♔xf7 7.d4 f3 8.gxf3?! 8.♗c4+ is more exact.

8...♗e7 8...d5! pretty much refutes White's error at move 8, as was proven in Gunsberg - Bird, London 1889.

9.♗c4+ d5 10.♗xd5+ ♔g7 10...♔e8 is a viable alternative.

11.♗e3 ♗xh4+ 12.♔d2 ♗f6 13.c3 ♘e7 14.♗b3 ♘bc6 15.♔c2 ♘g6 16.f4 White's pawn phalanx is worth a piece.

16...♘a5 17.f5 ♘xb3 18.axb3 ♗g5 He could have tried 18...♘e7 19.♕xg4+ ♔f7.

19.♕xg4 ♗xe3 20.♕xg6+ ♔f8 21.♕g3 ♗g5 21...♕g5 was better, but Wayte clearly underestimated White's attack.

22.♘d2 ♕d6? This is a losing blunder; 22...♕f6 was better when 23.♖af1 keeps up the pressure.

23.♕xg5! "Ingenious and quite sound. By this timely sacrifice Mr Thorold obtains an irresistible attack", Wormald.

23...hxg5 24.♖xh8+ ♔e7 25.♖ah1 ♕f4 26.♖1h7+ ♔d6 27.♖d8+ ♔c6 28.♖h6+ ♔b5 29.♖d5+

1–0

Illustrated London News, 27th January 1876

Edmund **Thorold** - Rev **Coker**

Birmingham 1877

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘g5 h6 6.♘xf7 ♔xf7 7.d4 f3 8.♗c4+ Improving on his game with Wayte.

8...d5 9.♗xd5+ ♔g7 10.gxf3 c6 10...♗e7.

11.♗b3 ♗e7 12.♗e3 ♗xh4+ 13.♔d2 Thematic play, when Black accepts the lure of the h pawn, here and in the Kieseritzky Gambit.

13...♘f6 14.♘c3 ♗g5 15.f4 ♗xf4 Returning the piece to reach what he hopes is a better endgame; 15...♗h4 saves the bishop: after 16.♕g1 g3 17.Rxh4 ♘xe4+ 18.♘xe4 ♕xh4 19.♘xg3 White has compensation for the exchange.

16.♗xf4 ♕xd4+ 17.♔c1 ♕xd1+ 18.♔xd1 h5 Black has two connected passed pawns, but White has the bishop pair and the safer king.

19.♔e2 ♔g6 20.♖ad1 ♘e8? Played to prevent the irritating pin 21.♖d6; this allows a rook infiltration which ties Black down. 20...♘bd7 21.♖d6 ♔g7 was a better try, but while Black has undeveloped pieces on c8 and a8 he is fighting a losing battle.

21.♖d8 ♘a6 22.♗d6 g3 23.♔e3 Sidestepping Black's threat.

23...h4 24.♗xg3 h3 25.♗e6 ♗xe6 Or else he loses a piece.

26.♖xa8 ♖f8 27.♗d6 ♖h8 28.♘e2 Black is lost.

28...♗f7 29.♘f4+ ♔f6 30.e5+ ♔f5 31.♘e2 ♗d5 32.♖f1+ ♔e6 33.♘f4+ ♔d7 34.♘xd5+ cxd5 35.♖f7+ ♔c6 36.♖c8+ ♔b6 37.e6 h2 38.♗xh2 ♖xh2 39.♖xe8 ♘c7 40.♖ee7 ♖xc2 41.♖xc7 ♖xc7 42.e7...

1–0

Glasgow Weekly Herald, 22nd September 1877

Edmund **Thorold** - Isidor **Gunsberg**

Purssell's 1877

1.e4 e5 2.f4 exf4 3.♘f3 g5 4.h4 g4 5.♘g5 h6 6.♘xf7 ♔xf7 7.d4 f3 8.♗c4+ 7.d6 A relatively unexplored sideline.

8.♗xf4 ♘f6 9.♗c4+ ♔g7 10.0–0 ♘xe4 This opens lines to his king.

11.♕d3 ♘f6 11...d5 12.♗e5+ is embarrassing, while 11...♗f5 is met by 12.♗xh6+.

12.♘c3 ♗e7 12...d5 13.♘xd5 ♘xd5 14.♗e5+.

13.♖ae1 ♘c6 13...d5 14.h5 ♘xh5 15.♘xd5 ♘xf4 16.♘xf4 favours White.

14.♘d5 ♘xd5 This is dubious; he needed to try 14...♖f8.

15.♗xd5 ♗f6 16.♗xc6 bxc6 17.h5 ♖f8 18.♕g6+ ♔h8 19.♕xh6+ ♔g8 20.♕g6+ ♗g7 20...♔h8 21.c3.

21.♗g5 ♖xf1+ 22.♖xf1 ♕d7 23.♖e1 ♔f8 24.c3 ♗a6 25.♗e7+ ♕xe7 25...♔g8 26.h6.

26.♖xe7 ♗xd4+ 27.cxd4 ♔xe7 28.♕g7+ ♔e6 29.♕xg4+ ♔d5 30.h6 ♗d3 31.h7 ♗xh7

31...♖h8 loses to 32.♕g8+

32.♕h5+ ...

1–0

Saturday Advertiser, 12th January 1878

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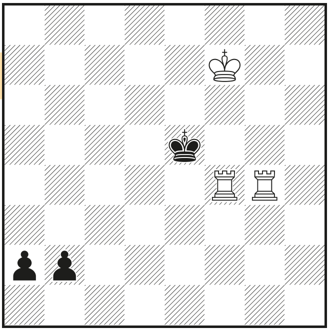
BRITISH CHESS MAGAZINE Since 1881

Endgame Studies

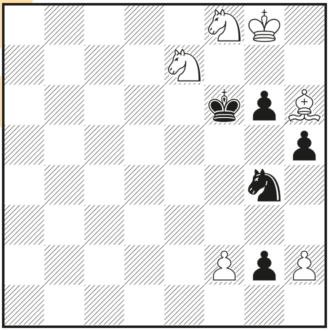
by Ian Watson
ian@irwatson.uk

1



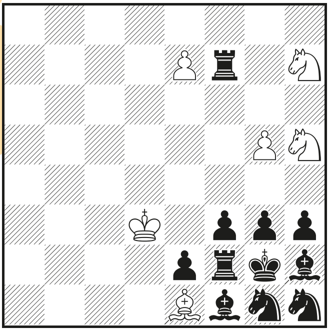
A. Sochniev
2005
WIN

2



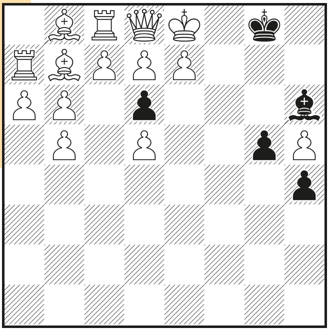
A. Avni
Variantim 2019
DRAW

3



M. Neghina & A. Rusz
WCCT9 2012
WIN

4



V. Tarasiuk
2020
DRAW

Modern Masters

These studies are by four of the leading modern composers. Last year, in this column, I showed you studies by several others of the best study composers of the 21st century. They were all contenders for the title of World Champion of study composing, and so too are the four composers here. All four of these composers competed in the previous World Championship and they were highly placed in the event. They are all also taking part in the current World Championship; the results will be announced later this year. Will we see one of the “candidates” usurping the current Champion, Oleg Pervakov? Watch this space…

We begin with a study by Alexey Sochniev. He’s a Grandmaster of chess composition from St. Petersburg. I don’t think he would consider this study one of his masterpieces, but it’s a fine work nonetheless and it’s not too hard to solve.

Amatzia Avni is a composing Master from Israel. His position looks like it will be a dance of the knights to try and get one of them to guard g1; there’s an element of that, but the real theme is… well, wait and see - on move six.

Our third study is a joint composition, but Mihai Neghina isn’t taking part in the World Championship whereas Arpad Rusz is doing so, and was fifth in the previous Championship. Both are from Rumania. This study was composed by them for the other World Championship for studies - the WCCT is the team competition; it was won that time (and frequently) by Russia. In this study, Black’s rook will go rampant, but he can’t let White capture it with the e1 bishop.

The final study is by Vladislav Tarasiuk from Ukraine; he gave it the motto ‘Noah’s Ark’ and he dedicated it “to healthcare providers and all people”. His point was that the play involves the lockdown of many men. While that may sound somewhat contrived to us, the study was published at the very start of COVID lockdown, when we all looked at life differently to how we do now. There are only three legal first moves for White, one of which is clearly bad, so you can expect that the plausible one that doesn’t work will be thematically related to the other one.

The solutions are on page 191.

Openings for Amateurs

by Pete Tamburro; ptamburro@aol.com

THE NO-NAME DEFENCE TO THE RUY LOPEZ

Considering the age of the Ruy Lopez opening, it's no small wonder that there are seemingly myriad variations that have names. Some are named after people, some after towns, some after tournaments, some after moves and some are just just the imaginative creation of a variety of chess neologists.

Of late, on the ICC, I've been running into a 'no-name' defence. My first reaction to it was, 'Hey, there must be something sharp I can do here to punish it.' After all, this defence was ignoring the sacred tablets handed down by our chess Moses-like theoreticians in the Closed Variation of the Ruy Lopez.

The usual sidesteps all have names: Schliemann, Steinitz, Open, Archangel, Marshall, et al., and we are all familiar with them. However, the main line of the Closed Variation has always been etched in stone: 1.e4 e5 2. ♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 8.7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0. I remember being taught why each move in this two-person opening ballet was happening at that moment and why this was the yellow brick road of the Ruy. Then, along come a good many recent opponents who decided the sacred order to get to that position didn't matter! You can play an early b5 with an early d6, and some even played ♗e7 before ♘f6. They all seemed to assume they were just going to get in all the eight moves in any old order so long as they got there.

Can you imagine the uproar if a church just mixed up the order of the Ten Commandments? All hell would break loose! If you don't believe me, just recently thousands of baptisms were declared null and void when it was discovered that a priest in the southwestern U.S. had been for years doing the ritual words wrong by saying 'We baptise you…' instead of 'I baptize you…'.

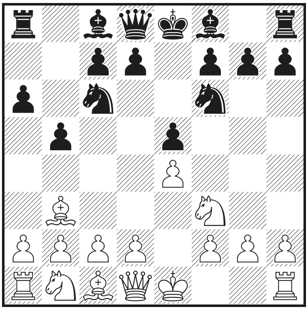
It was with that sort of theological outrage that I went looking into these sinners' evil deeds. The trail led to a game between Sir George Thomas and Keres in the 1930s, right down to Magnus Carlsen versus Quang Liem Le in 2021! The Carlsen game is our feature game with lots of little paths to get lost in along the way. If you play the Ruy Lopez, all this is worth a look.

Magnus **Carlsen** – **Le Quang** Liem

Aimchess US Rapid Preliminary (3),
28.08.2021

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 b5 It can go another way as well. I was reminded of Sir George Thomas-Paul Keres, Margate, 1937, which was heavily annotated by Keres in the three-volume work edited by Golombek. Keres was critical of White's play with ♘g5, and people shied away from it; however, modern chess has come up with a completely different conclusion - White is OK. Does that work with our line under consideration without ♘c3? 4...♘f6 5.♘c3 *(5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 d6)* 5...b5 6.♗b3 d6 7.♘g5 d5 8.♘xd5 ♘d4 *(8...♗c5?? 9.♘xf7! ♔xf7 10.♘xf6+ ♔xf6 11.♕f3+ ♔e7 12.♕f7+ ♔d6 13.d4 ♘xd4 14.♕d5+ ♔e7 15.♗g5+ ♔f8 16.♕f7#)* 9.♘e3!? *(Better may have been 9.♘c3 ♘xb3 10.axb3 b4 11.♘e2 h6 12.♘f3 ♘xe4 13.0-0)* 9...♘xb3 10.axb3 h6 11.♘f3 ♘xe4 12.♘xe5 ♕f6 13.♘5g4 *(Here, Sir George finally strays from his solid play. 13.♘f3 ♗b7 14.♕e2!? (Necessary was 14.0-0) 14...0-0-0 15.0-0 and we have a very imbalanced game. Black has more mobility, but a weakened king position. The better tactician will do well here. Keres demonstrates that. 15...♗d6 (15...♘g5! and Keres, happy with the mobility of his pieces as opposed to Thomas's awkwardly placed men, went* *on to win. It does raise some interesting questions about this whole ♘c3 line, though, for both sides. However, we need to get back to our trying to follow the main line of the Closed Variation, where this ♘g5 idea needs to be considered anyhow.))*

5.♗b3 ♘f6

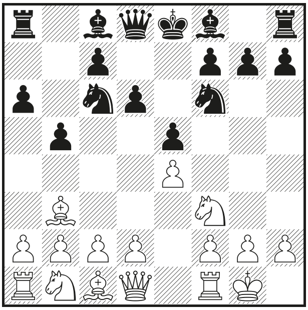


Some players have tried 5...♗e7 against me, but it's met simply by 6.d4 exd4 7.0-0 *(Or even 7.c3 if you're in a frisky mood.)*; IM John Watson, in his Mastering the Chess Openings, Vol. 1, gives this exciting possibility: 5...♗c5 6.c3 ♘f6 7.d4 exd4 8.e5 ♘e4 9.♗d5 ♘xf2 10.♔xf2 dxc3+ 11.♔g3!; I was half-expecting 5...♘a5 , which Taimanov popularised back in the day. Then, of course, do you play the risky 6.Bxf7+ or go safely with 6.0-0 ♘xb3 7. axb3?

This position raises interesting questions. Does it matter if Black plays this early b5? Does 6.♘g5 work here? Do you attack the 'prematurely' advanced b5 pawn with a4? Do you meet the flank move with action in the centre with d4? Do you go slow Ruy Lopez with d3 and c3? Or, as Carlsen essays, simply castle. It's probably a matter of style except for the ♘g5 move, but it's a decision you should reach before you meet the opponent who plays this.

6.0-0 6.♘g5 d5! 7.exd5 ♘d4 8.0-0 ♗c5 and Black has an improved version of the Fritz Variation of the Two Knights. If White goes with 6.d4, we are in familiar territory with this sequence: 6...d6 7.c3 ♗g4 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♖e1 0-0 and we find ourselves in the non-h3 line, which we will cover in future columns.; 6.a4 ♗b7 seems playable for Black *(or even 6...b4 7.d4 with a slight edge to White.)*; 6.d3 ♘a5 7.♗d2 ♘xb3 8.axb3 ♗e7 9.♘c3 is solid but slow for White.

6...d6



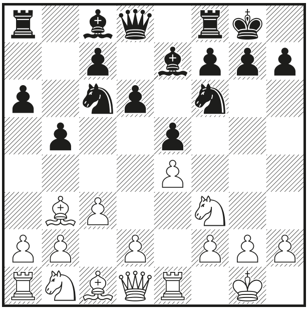
7.♖e1 There are quite a few deviations from here. Black seems to be getting his share of the action in all of them. All of these lines are just suggestions worthy of deeper study.

7.d3 ♘a5 8.♗d2 ♘xb3 9.axb3 ♗e7 10.♘c3 ♗b7=;

7.d4 ♘xd4 8.♘xd4 exd4 9.a4! *(9.♕xd4?? c5)* 9...♗b7 10.axb5 axb5 11.♖xa8 ♗xa8 12.♘a3 ♕d7 13.♕d3 c6 14.c3 dxc3∓; 7.a4 b4 8.d4 ♗g4 9.dxe5 dxe5 10.♘bd2 ♗c5 11.h3 ♗h5 *(11...♗xf3 12.♕xf3 0-0 13.♕e2 ♘d4 14.♕c4 ♗a7 15.♗a2 ♘h5=)* 12.a5 0-0 13.c3 bxc3 14.bxc3 ♕d3 15.♕c2 ♖ad8 16.♕xd3 ♖xd3 17.♗a4 ♗xf3 18.♘xf3 ♖d6 19.♖e1 h6 20.♔f1 ♖fd8; 7.♘g5 d5 8.exd5 ♘d4 9.d3 ♘xd5 10.♖e1 f6=.

7...♗e7 7...♘a5 8.d4 ♘xb3 9.axb3 exd4 10.♘xd4 and White has a very comfortable game here. Black's queenside needs attending to, which may be delayed by the need to spend two moves to castle. White has easy access to the kingside as well and may even be able to position his pieces for use on both sides of the board. Black's theoretical freeing move of d5 will be difficult because of White's superior mobility.

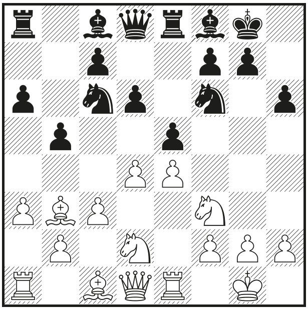
8.c3 0-0



Here we are. Almost there. White has yet to play h3 with d4 to follow, and Black gets to choose any number of black systems here. Carlsen now decides that two can play that game. In fact, he's been on both sides of this a3 move. He's obviously confident in having an equal middlegame where he will just outplay his opponent.

9.a3 h6 10.d4 ♖e8 10...♗g4 11.♗e3 ♘a5 12.♗c2 ♘c4 13.♗c1 exd4 14.cxd4 c5. It would have been interesting to see how he handled the bishop pin: 15.♘c3 ♗xf3 16.gxf3 cxd4 17.♕xd4 ♕c8 18.♗d3 ♕e6 19.♔h1 ♖ac8 20.♖g1 ♔h8 21.f4 ♖fe8 22.♗c2= There wasn't a single game in the database with the pin idea, which you would think would be almost routine.

11.♘bd2 ♗f8

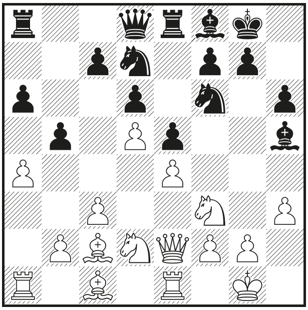


It was at this point that I thought the purpose of a3 was to allow the bishop to play ♗-a2-b1 and the queen to have the c2 spot, having the Q/B battery aiming at h7. Oh, well.

12.♗c2 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗h5 14.d5 He closes the centre because he has g4 in mind. There's a bonus, too, as the knight is still on c6, so there's no immediate pawn move there as in the main line.

14...♘b8 This Breyer idea doesn't work well in this position. Why not play to aid c6 with 14...♘e7? See the note on move 16.

15.a4 ♘bd7 16.♕e2



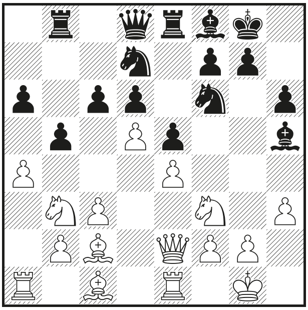
White now seems to be entering a nice Ruy positional edge. The queen put pressure on the b-pawn. The knight on d2 will head to f1 for a post on g3 or e3 after g4 and the Lopez bishops are where they always are - ready for a break. Black's knights and bishops are a bit cramped. He will have to do something on the queenside to gain any activity.

16...♖b8 This leaves the a-file to White's rook. Not the best idea.

17.♘b3! This is why Carlsen is world champion and those of us of the great unwashed are amateurs. Remember the last note about the ♘f1, g4, ♘g3 sequence? Very routine in the Ruy Lopez, yet it would not be good in this position. If you play the Ruy as an opening, one of the most important lessons you learn is that you have to be acutely aware of what's happening or can happen on both sides of the board at once. Carlsen addresses the needs of the position, not some routine formation to roll out.

He might have also played 17.axb5 axb5 18.♘b3; Black gets counterplay and a beautifully posted knight after the routine plan 17.g4 ♗g6 18.♘f1 b4 19.c4 ♘c5 20.♘g3 b3.

17...c6



And now we see why Carlsen went to b3. He foresaw Black's only counterplay with c6 and realised his knight on b3 would be very effective in neutralising it. One other thing: this position would be much more promising for Black if his knight were on e7 as noted above. Black didn't do the long-term planning Carlsen did. He had to see that the support of his only break would need a knight on e7 and he also had to see that Carlsen's playing ♘b3 would stymie his break. Maybe he assumed White would go routine with ♘g3. I find this to be a major reason why the Ruy Lopez is such a great opening to grow in. You have to understand the 'tabiya' you're setting up in the opening and understand what the demands on that position would be. The more games you play over, the deeper and richer your understanding of chess becomes.

18.dxc6 ♘c5 19.axb5 axb5 20.♘xc5 dxc5 # The smoke has cleared from the skirmish. Now, Carlsen can return to solidifying his edge on the kingside with g4 and ♘h4. The black pawns are targets on the queenside while the lonely White c6 pawn will cost Black two moves to gobble up.

21.g4 ♗g6 22.c4 bxc4 A bit more uncooperative was 22...b4.

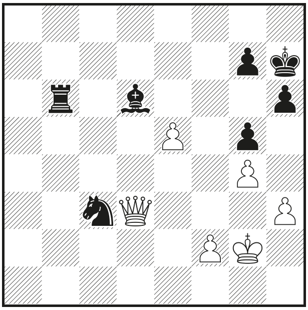
23.♗d2 ♕c8 Not at all better was 23...♗d6 24.♘h4 ♗h7 25.♘f5 ♗xf5 26.gxf5 ♖xb2 27.♗c3 ♖b8 28.♔h2 ♕e7 29.♖g1 ♖a8 30.♖xa8 ♖xa8 31.♕xc4 ♖c8 32.♗a4±.

24.♗c3 ♗d6 White now has an embarrassment of riches with his next move or ♘d2 or ♕xc4.

25.♘h4 ♔h7 26.♕xc4 ♖e7 27.♖ed1 ♕xc6 28.♘xg6 fxg6 29.♖a6 See move 16 note for Black.

29...♖b6 30.♗a4 Black could just resign here.

30...♖xa6 31.♗xc6 ♖xc6 32.b4 ♖b7 33.b5 ♖cb6 34.♔g2 ♗b8 35.♖b1 ♘e8 36.♕xc5 ♘d6 37.♕xe5 ♘xb5 38.♕c5 ♗d6 39.♕e3 g5 40.e5 ♘xc3 41.♖xb6 ♖xb6 42.♕d3+



A small, but telling move. Black has demonstrated an unwillingness to resign. Even though it's an overwhelming position for White, playing 42.♕xb6 ♗xe5 would just turn into a slightly longer annoying endgame with no doubt about the result. Carlsen nips that in the bud with efficient simplicity.

42...♔h8 43.exd6

1-0

We gained two big things from this search into the no-name defence. First, we found out that just because your opponent goes 'out of sequential order', it doesn't mean it's not playable and you have to exercise care and judgment. Secondly, we saw a world champion give a first-rate lesson in the Ruy Lopez and how to properly approach playing it. I hope you enjoyed both those things as much as I did discovering them.

SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

This month's originals

Do have a go at solving our first problem, which has some very attractive play. A lot of White's pieces are already usefully deployed in the diagram, but what about that rook at d4 and that bishop at e8? For the other problems you may prefer simply to read on to enjoy the solutions. To solve the typical three-mover composed by our distinguished Israeli contributors you need to consider deeply the possibilities of the position. For the remaining two originals, the helpmates, you need to remember that in this genre Black initiates a collaborative sequence of moves leading to his being mated in the stipulated number of moves - in the case of Christer's problem, three. If you are fairly new to solving helpmates, Christer's may be a bit of a tussle, but I think that, at least, you'll enjoy reading through the solutions. The second helpmate is strictly for devotee helpmate solvers! - but again reading through the solutions you'll enjoy the composer's resourcefulness.

A striking key move

In Kabe's 2-mover that white rook at d4 isn't doing much - can we do anything with it to threaten mate? 1.♖d6, renewing the guard on c6, would free up the white queen for 2.♕g1 mate, but of course the simple rejoinder 1…♖xd6 scotches this. This might give you the clue that playing 1.♕g1 straight away is the key, and this move, which (far from strengthening the guard on c6) leaves c6 as an unprotected flight square, is indeed the key. The threat is 2.♖d6, and there is a pleasing set of defences and mating replies - 1…♔xc6 2.♕g6 (a switchback; and now we see what the bishop at e8 is for!); 1…♖xc7 2.♖a4; 1…♖e7 2.♖e4; 1…♖f7 2.♖f4; 1…♖g7 2.♖g4; 1…♗d5 2.♖c4; 1…♖d5 2.♖xd5; and 1…♖xd4 2.♕xd4.

A testing three-mover

As I said above, our second problem requires a deep appreciation of the possibilities of the position. In this apparently overwhelming position it looks as though 1.♕xd3, threatening 2.b4, should do the trick, as 1…♕xd3 is met by 2.♘xd3 mate. However, 1…♖a4! is then a successful defence. Instead, White must play 1.♕f3!, which threatens 2.♕h5+!, after which 2…♕xh5 would lead to 3.♘xd3 and 2…e5 would be met by 3.♕xe5. There are a number of ways for Black to defend against this threat, of which the most interesting, I think, is 1…♖e8, after which the delayed 2.♕xd3! forces mate next move, as …♖a4 is no longer available; 2…b4 3.axb4; 2…♕xd3 3.♘xd3. 1…♖xa3 is also a defence, and kudos for you if you saw that this commits the unlikely error of taking protection away from the square f8, allowing a deflection sacrifice by the erstwhile mating move 2.♘xd3, which here (being check) triggers 2…♕xd3 3.♕xf8. Or 1…e5: the error here is removing protection from d5, so we have 2.♖xb5+ cxb5 3.♕d5. Two other defences fail more mundanely but in ways that accentuate the central strategy of this rich problem: 1…♕e4 2.♕xe4 ♖xa3 3.♘xd3 and 1…♕f5 2.♘xf5 exf5 3.♘xd3.

Zilahi strikes again!

Our first helpmate features our old friend Zilahi, the popular helpmate theme in which a white piece that mates in one solution is captured in the other, and vice versa. It is always striking in a helpmate when a white queen, given the liberty of this genre to go anywhere (and, as in Christer's problem, not hemmed in or pinned), has to be captured in order to facilitate a mate (especially when in the second solution the mighty queen will indeed administer mate). Here, the rationale for the queen's capture is that it is necessary to eliminate her guard on a square that the black king must traverse on his way to a square on which it takes the white knight all three moves to get to the mating square - 1.♕xg2 ♘g3 2.♔b7 ♘e4 3.♔a6 ♘c5. Kudos to the composer for showing this soundly, with no cooks, only the one other, intended solution, in which it is the white knight that is captured

(See page 167)

and the white queen that administers mate - 1.♕xf1 c5 2.♕f7 cxb6 3.♕d7 ♕a8.

A typical Ljubomir Ugren helpmate

Regular readers will know what I mean by a “typical Ljubomir” problem. (I’m repeating what I said in this column in January!) He specializes in very long helpmates, in which all the (interesting) twists and turns are micro-managed so as to comply with the requirement of computer soundness. He also complies with the aesthetic requirement that the solutions should not to an undue degree replicate elements of other solutions. Admire the way that (notwithstanding the need to repeat 1…♔b1) this criterion is satisfied in three typically twisty variations: 1.♖e2 ♔b1 2.♖de1 ♔a1 3.d1=♗ ♘a2 4.♔e3 ♘xc3 5.♔d2 ♔xb2 6.♕e3 ♘b1; 1.♘a4+ ♔b1 2.b2 ♔a2 3.♔f3 ♘e2 4.e4 ♘xc3 5.e3 ♘b5 6.♔e2 ♘xd4; and 1.♕d5 ♔b1 2.♗d4 ♔a1 3.♗c5 ♔xb2 4.♔d4 ♘a2 5.♖e4 ♘c3 6.♘e3 ♘b5.

SOLUTIONS TO ENDGAMES

(See page 184)

Sochniev

1.♖e4+ ♔d5 2.♖d4+ ♔e5 3.♖ge4+ ♔f5 4.♖e7 b1♕ 5.♖ed7 a1♕ 6.♖7d5 mate.

There are some attractive echoed mates in the sidelines too:

1…♔f5 2.♖gf4+ ♔g5 3.♔e6 b1♕ 4.♖g4+ ♔h6 5.♖h4+ Kg7 6.♖eg4+ ♔f8 7.♖h8 mate.

2…♔c5 3.♖c4+ ♔b5 4.♖b4+ ♔c5 5.♔e6 b1♕ 6.♖gc4 mate. Or in this line, 3…♔d5 4.♔f6 b1♕ 5.♖gd4 mate. Also in the 2…♔c5 line, 4…♔a6 5.♖a4+ ♔b5 6.♖gb4+ ♔c5 7.♖xb2.

Avni

1.♗g5+ ♔xg5 2.♘h7+ ♔h6 3.h4 g1♕ 4.♘g5 ♘f6+ 5.♔h8 ♕xg5 6.f4 ♕d5 7.♘f5+ gxf5 stalemate.

1.♘d5+? ♔f5 2.♘e3+ ♘xe3 3.♗xe3 g1♕ 4.h4 ♕g4 5.♗g5 ♕xg5 6.hxg5 h4 7.♔f7 h3 8.♘xg6 ♔xg5 9.♘e5 ♔f4 wins. In the main line, 1…♔e5 2.♘exg6+ ♔d6 3.h3 g1♕ 4.hxg4 draws.

Instead of the wonderful 6.f4, if White tries 6.hxg5+? we get 6…♔xg5 7.f4+ ♔g4 8.♘xg6 ♘d5 winning.

Neghina & Rusz

1.♘f8 ♖xf8 2.e8♕ ♖f7 3.♕e7 ♖f6 4.♕e6 ♖f5 5.♕e5 ♖f8 6.♕d4 ♖f5 7.♔c3 ♖c5+ 8.♔b3 ♖b5+ 9.♔a4 ♖f5 10.♕d8 ♖f7 11.g6 ♖f5 12.♕g5 ♖f8 13.g7 ♖f5 14.g8♘ wins.

1.e8♕? ♖d7+. 1.♘7f6? ♖xf6 2.e8♕ ♖d6+. 1.g6? ♖f5 2.♘g5 ♖d5+. 1.♔c2? ♖f6.

Alternatives in the main line include: 1…♖f6 2.♘e6; 2.e8♘? ♖f6 3.♔c3 ♖c6+ 4.♔b3 ♖b6+ 5.♔a4 ♖a6+; 4.♔c2? ♖c6+ 5.♔b3 ♖c4; and 8.♔b4? ♖c4+.

White could also have played 7.♔c2 or 7.♔c4, transposing back into the given solution; the judges of the Championship seem to have regarded those as merely minor duals.

Tarasiuk

1.♖a8 h3 2.♗a7 h2 3.♖cb8 h1♕ 4.♕c8 ♕xh5+ 5.♔d8 ♕f7 6.♗c6 ♗f8 7.♕b7 ♗xe7+ 8.♔c8 ♕f5 stalemate.

1.♗a8? h3 2.b7 h2 3.b6 ♗g7 4.h6 h1♕ 5.hxg7 ♕h5 mate.

In the main line, 6.e8♕+? ♗f8 7.♕e6 ♗g7 8.♕e8+ ♕f8 9.♕xf8+ ♔xf8 10.♗c6 ♗f6 mate.

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